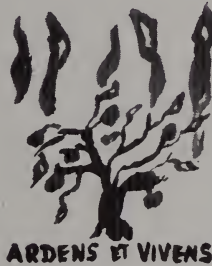


*Studies in*  
REFORMED THEOLOGY  
AND  
HISTORY



Volume 3 Number 1  
Winter 1995

PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

*Studies in*  
REFORMED THEOLOGY AND HISTORY



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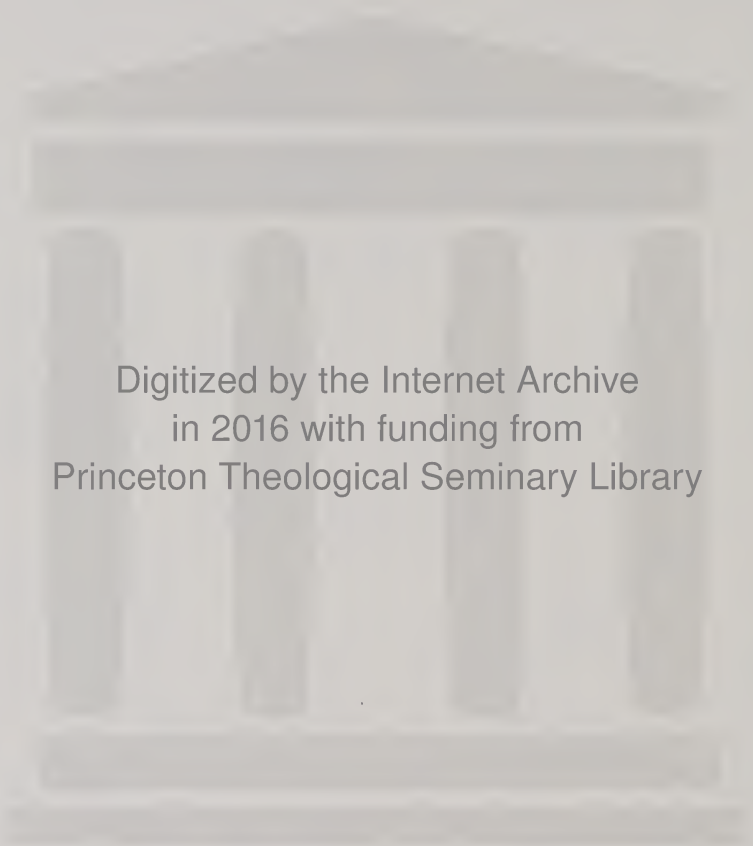
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Language, Literature, and Politics

JOHN W. STEWART



PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

STUDIES IN REFORMED THEOLOGY AND HISTORY is published four times annually by Princeton Theological Seminary. All correspondence should be addressed to David Willis, Editor, STUDIES IN REFORMED THEOLOGY AND HISTORY, P.O. Box 821, Princeton, NJ 08542 0803, USA. Fax (609) 497-7829.

#### MANUSCRIPT SUBMISSIONS

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Printed in the United States of America.

ISSN: 1067-4268

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

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## Preface

At the outset I need to make two explanatory comments. First, I wrote this paper because of a continuing and wide-spread misunderstanding about Charles Hodge (1797–1878), especially among historians of American culture and among specialists in American Reformed tradition. That problem is compounded by the surprisingly sparse scholarship about this prominent nineteenth-century theologian and influential ecclesial leader. My intention is to find a middle ground from which to address both cadres of scholars. One reason for the unfamiliarity about Hodge is attributable to the fact that scholars usually concentrate on Hodge's three-volume *Systematic Theology* (1872) and bypass his 140 articles on a very wide range of topics in the less accessible *The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review*. Hodge edited this sophisticated journal between 1825 and 1868; unfortunately it is avoided more than it is consulted.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, when I reference Hodge's journal, I have decided to include lengthier quotations than usually tolerated and have tried to provide the reader with extended analyses of a few of Hodge's principal articles about American science, literature, and politics. I hope others will soon join me in a wider and more critical reassessment of this significant American theologian.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1872. In print, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1952; Cambridge, England: J. Clarke, 1938). Hereafter cited as *ST*. Hodge was a septuagenarian when he wrote this work. For history of this work, see David Willis-Watkins, "Hodge's Systematic Theology," *American Presbyterians: Journal of Presbyterian History* 66 (1988): 269–272. Along with an "association of gentlemen" in Princeton, Hodge served as editor of the *Biblical Repertory* (1825–1828) and its successor, *The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review*, from 1825 to 1868. He wrote a short history of this journal in 1872 in the *Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review: Index Volume* (Philadelphia: Peter Walker, 1891), pp. 1–39. Hereafter Hodge's journal will be cited in footnotes as *BRPR*.

<sup>2</sup> Late in my research two excellent pieces of scholarship came to my attention. One was the very recent edition of Hodge's *What is Darwinism?* with insightful introductory essays by its editors, Mark N. Noll and David N. Livingstone. This new edition will nudge the religious controversies about Darwinism to new levels of sophistication. The other is a 1980 doctoral dissertation by David N. Murchie entitled "Morality and Social Ethics in the Thought of Charles Hodge." While we differ in our approach and appraisal of Hodge, this is an excellent, careful study and deserving of publication and wider distribution.



Second, I have written this essay with two historiographic interests on my mind. One seeks to address the contextualization of Charles Hodge. The few theologians or historians of doctrine who write about the Reformed tradition in nineteenth-century America interpret Hodge in a vacuum. I have tried, within the confines of a restricted space, to locate Hodge within his own cosmos, with attention to his particular cultural and political milieu. My other intention is to challenge those scholars who usually contend that Hodge's theology and cultural awareness was simplistic, traditionalistic, fideistic, and somehow irrelevant. While I hope to initiate a revised estimate of Hodge, I do not seek to reprobate his way of doing Reformed theology.

Finally, I need to offer two personal words. For reasons of economy, the footnotes will have to serve double duty as bibliographical references. Second, I want to acknowledge a few collaborators who have encouraged me along the way: James Turner, David Hollinger, James Moorehead, J. Wentzel van Huuysteen, Daniel Migliore, Richard Osmer, Donald E. Gordon, and Jack B. Rogers, to name only a few. I am especially indebted to librarians and archivists at Speer Library at Princeton Seminary and Firestone Library at Princeton University.<sup>3</sup> William O. Harris, Archivist at Speer Library has been of incalculable help, as was his associate, Raymond Cannata. Denise Schwalb interrupted her work as a faculty secretary countless times to assist. Maureen Stewart, my wife, critiqued multiple drafts and her sharp editorial pen kept me from even more grammatical blunders, convoluted sentences, and academic pretensions. I am especially appreciative for her unstinting help. I also want publicly to thank David Willis for his gentle encouragements, patience with exceeded deadlines, and insightful comments about Reformed theology, which he knows so well.

John W. Stewart

<sup>3</sup> Hereafter the "Hodge Papers" in the archives of Princeton University will be designated as APUL and the "Hodge Papers" in the archives of Speer Library, Princeton Theological Seminary will be designated as APTS.

## Abbreviations

- APTS "Hodge Papers." Archives of Hodge Papers, Speer Library, Princeton Theological Seminary.
- APUL "Hodge Papers." Archives of Hodge Papers, Princeton University.
- BRPR *The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review*
- LCH Archibald A. Hodge. *Life of Charles Hodge*. New York: Charles Scribner, 1880.
- ST Charles Hodge. *Systematic Theology*. 3 vols. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1872. In print, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1952; Cambridge, England: J. Clarke, 1938.

# I

## Introduction

### CHARLES HODGE'S ERA

Most appraisals of Charles Hodge (1797–1878) paint him as either comic or tragic: *comic* because of his intentionally provocative statement that “there never was a new idea” at Princeton Seminary; *tragic* because he failed to appropriate the currents of modern thought in the nineteenth century. Few historians contest the range and depth of his influence in American culture;<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> The late dean of historians of American religion, Sydney Ahlstrom, maintained that American Reformed thought would have been entirely different without Hodge. Of Hodge Ahlstrom wrote: “Probably nobody in the country was so generously well-versed in all the sciences of theology.” Bruce Kuklick, a historian of American philosophical traditions, reminded his readers that Reformed theology is the longest intellectual tradition in American culture and claimed that Hodge was one of a triumvirate who “ruled Calvinistic theology” from the 1830s to the 1870s. According to Kuklick, however, Hodge was also one of the prime reasons for the demise of American Calvinism. The historian of American culture, James Turner sees Hodge as a pivotal force in nineteenth-century discourse, albeit impoverished in religious resources and wanting in constructive alternatives to America’s growing unbelief. Richard Cardwardine has given Hodge’s political and social thought a significant role in antebellum politics. David Hollinger included a section from Hodge’s *Systematic Theology* in a widely used textbook on American intellectual tradition. Most recently, Paul K. Conkin, while tracing the “uneasy center” of American Reformed Christianity, placed Hodge at the center of a “golden age” when American Reformed theology matured and foundered. Further references to Hodge by historians would be tedious. While appraisals vary, American historians continue to acknowledge that Hodge was a significant voice and personality in American Reformed thought.

Sources for the above comments are as follows: Sydney Ahlstrom, *The Shaping of American Religion* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1961), pp. 263–264; Bruce Kuklick, *Churchmen and Philosophers: From Jonathan Edwards to John Dewey* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985), pp. 66–80; 203–215; James Turner, *Without God, Without Creed* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1985), pp. 185–196; and David Hollinger and Charles Capper, eds., *The American Intellectual Tradition* 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 5–12. Paul K. Conkin, *The Uneasy Center: Reformed Christianity in Antebellum America* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995).

however, many theologians (or historians of theology) dismiss him as insignificant. Many others chastise him for skewing Reformed theology on what they claim were rationalistic, confessionalist, or biblicist misconstruals.<sup>5</sup>

Without either cannonizing or censoring Hodge, the following pages seek to move beyond these tired appraisals. Rather, he needs to be evaluated on his own terms and placed at the center of those lively discourses that flourished in the mid-nineteenth century between Reformed thought and American culture. I do not attempt here a larger—and urgently needed—critique of Hodge as a formal, constructive Reformed theologian. Rather, I propose to introduce Hodge as theologian of culture, or better, to portray him as a Reformed theologian whose interaction with American culture was as formidable and informed as his stout, confessional theology. Building on Hodge's interplay with cultural issues, I want to lay the groundwork for a more encompassing argument that posits a *particular* Reformed theology in America, a distinctive species of the Protestant Reformed tradition generated by the partic-

<sup>5</sup> Claude Welch interprets Hodge within what he called a "confessional resurgence" in American theology but claims that Hodge was excessively dependent on Turretin and biblical authority; Brian A. Gerrish dismissed Hodge as being uninteresting, except in Hodge's controversy with John Nevin and the Mercersburg theology; in the three-volume history of nineteenth-century theology by Ninian Smart et al., only one sentence was entered about Hodge and that was in reference to Hodge's famed comment about Darwin's atheism; M. Eugene Osterhaven mentioned Hodge only once and that was in connection with issues of surrounding public education; and Karl Barth, who was fascinated by America's Civil War, was totally uninformed, apparently, about nineteenth-century American theologians. Most recently, George Stroup reinforces the shibboleths about Hodge but places him within an entourage of Reformed theologians between Schleremacher and Barth. Compared to historians of American culture, Hodge has not fared well among theologians.

It should be noted that a growing cadre of contemporary evangelical scholars take exception to the above generalization and see Hodge in a different and more constructive light. For example, George Marsden, Mark Noll, and David Wells interpret Hodge more sympathetically and rightly place him in the mainstream of American evangelicalism.

Sources for the above comments are: Claude Welch, *Protestant Thought in the Nineteenth Century*, 2 vols. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1972), pp. 200–204; Brian A. Gerrish, *Tradition and the Modern World* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978), p. 10; Ninian Smart et al., *Nineteenth Century Religious Thought in the West*, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 3: 1; M. Eugene Osterhaven, *The Spirit of the Reformed Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1971), p. 159; Karl Barth, *Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth Century*, in translation (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1973); George Stroup, ed., *Reformed Reader: A Sourcebook in Christian Theology*, vol. 2, *Contemporary Trajectories, 1799 to the Present* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993). George Marsden, "The Collapse of American Evangelical Academia," in *Faith and Rationality*, Nicholas Wolterstorff, ed. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983); Mark Noll, *The Princeton Theology, 1812–1921* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1983); David Wells, ed., *Reformed Theology in America: The Princeton Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1989).



ularity of American political and cultural contexts.<sup>6</sup> Martin Marty insists that there is an “American way of being religious,” and that particularity is the result of an “especially vivid dialogue with the context surrounding [American] Christianity.”<sup>7</sup> Long before Douglas John Hall thought about a *theologia crucis* within the unique environments of North America, Hodge was already engaged in such a task. Hodge knew first hand that Continental, British, and Scottish theologies were not automatically and uncritically transferable to American churches and academies. He did believe that the Reformed tradition possessed a doctrinal center and, in his case, that core was roughly equivalent with the Westminster Confessions. But he simultaneously believed that such nuclei of beliefs were inevitably contextualized, in his case, by the “exceptional” and particularist issues of American culture. But that argument will take another monograph, at least.<sup>8</sup>

The Swiss theologian Karl Barth once commented that F. D. E. Schleiermacher was the first personality in Protestant history to be fully conscious of the alignment of Christian theology with a wider intellectual life. “He took part in the philosophy, science, politics, social life and art of his time,” Barth observed, “as if they were his own concern, as the man who was responsible

<sup>6</sup> American ethnocultural historians like Robert Kelley, W. R. Brock, Anne Norton, and David Walker Howe often rely on anthropologists like Clifford Geertz and sociologists like Raymond Williams and employ the term “culture” to cover an evolving system of beliefs, attitudes, language, narratives, techniques, and rituals which human beings employ to cope with human existence, to make meaning of their world, and through which they transfer from generation to generation values and traditions they deem important. These historians use the word “society” to describe the structural relationships among people and the word “economy” to encompass how society employs its material resources. Ultimately, culture, social structures, and economy are integrated with varying degrees of articulation and formal organization. However, as for many Reformed theologians, Charles Hodge among them, these definitions may be too reductionistic. Hodge resisted the relativizing of religious symbols to socio-cultural contexts. He placed Christianity’s truth claims about its founding events (e.g., Jesus’ incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection) ontologically transcendent to any cultural interpretation of them and Christianity’s doctrinal tradition prior to any “signifying system” that might have eclipsed it. But, for the purposes of this essay, I side with the ethnocultural historians, and especially with David Walker Howe in *Political Culture of the American Whigs* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979) who has provided countless insights in my interpretation of Hodge.

<sup>7</sup> Martin Marty, “North America,” in *The Oxford History of Christianity*, John McManners, ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), ch. 11.

<sup>8</sup> Douglas John Hall, *Thinking the Faith: Christian Theology in a North American Context* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991). I use the word “exceptional” here in the sense that some historians of American culture employ the concept of “exceptionalism,” that is, the ways and values by which American culture is distinct from British, Continental, and African ones. See especially the essays by Daniel Bell, Andrew Greeley, Seymour Lipset, et. al. in *Is America Different?*, Byron Schafer, ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

in all these fields, the man . . . to lead in all the general achievement."<sup>9</sup> Both Barth and Schleiermacher paid little if any attention to American theologians and they were, apparently, unaware of Hodge's existence, or even Jonathan Edwards for that matter.<sup>10</sup> Had Barth read any of the 140 articles by Hodge in *The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review*, whose spectrum of topics compare favorably with those attributed to Schleiermacher, Barth would have discovered another Reformed theologian who led "in the general achievement" on the American scene. If Barth read the German scholastic Heinrich Hepppe (1820–1879) appreciatively, it was unfortunate that Barth never inquired about Americans like Hodge.

Charles Hodge spent his mature years (1830 to 1870) in a volatile and critical epoch in American life. In a brilliant interpretative essay, John Higham once called this era the "Age of Boundlessness."<sup>11</sup> Countless historians have tabulated those expansive energies and substantive changes in antebellum politics, literature, science, economics, social alignments, and cultural patterns. Many place the origins of modern American life and culture in these middle decades of the nineteenth century. Here are just a few of the remarkable changes during Hodge's lifetime: new territorial acquisitions in the West greatly multiplied the nation's hegemony and economic opportunities; the American capitalistic economic system entered its "taking-off" period with the advent of legal corporations, mass manufacturing, and the theory of interchangeable parts, creating what historians call the "market revolution"; an enormous widening of the horizons of technology (steamboats, railroads, factory machinery, and agricultural implements) transformed the pace and scale of life; modern public schools and university systems were firmly in place by mid-century; Americans discovered their own voices in the literature of

<sup>9</sup> Karl Barth, *Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth Century: Its Background and History*, p. 433. I am indebted to William Hutchinson for pointing out this comment by Karl Barth.

<sup>10</sup> As we shall see, Hodge was one of a very few American theologians who actually attended Schleiermacher's seminars and preaching in Berlin in 1828. But I know of no evidence that suggests that Schleiermacher ever acknowledged knowing the young American student.

<sup>11</sup> John Higham, *From Boundlessness to Consolidation: The Transformation of American Culture, 1848–1860* (Ann Arbor: William Clements Library, 1969).

After 1815 most of the limits Americans had assumed . . . seemed to melt away. The limits of ascribed status yielded to an egalitarian celebration of the self-made man. The limits of history dissolved in an ecstatic dedication to the future. The limits of reason were metamorphosed into the infinite possibilities of scientific knowledge and intuitive truths of the heart. The limits of human nature faded before a glowing promise of liberation from sin and social iniquity. The limits of nature itself receded in a new dynamic world-picture overflowing with vitality and endless growth. It would be absurd to suppose that these expansive sentiments and ideas ever overwhelmed more cautious and traditionalist views. The point is rather that their explosive thrust defined the great issues of the age.

Cooper, Emerson, Hawthorne, Melville, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and Whitman in the so-called "American Renaissance"; and the "benevolent empire" of voluntary and reformist associations dazzled that premier observer, Alexis de Tocqueville, who wondered why democracy succeeded in America and failed in France. The American women's liberation movements came into their own in 1848 with the Seneca Falls and Rochester platforms and conventions. Persistent, broad political coalitions—Federalist/Whig/Republican and Jeffersonian/Jacksonian/Democratic—solidified American traditions such as annual elections and the two-party system.<sup>12</sup> Hodge's era confronted the deep cultural cleavage between the "Cavalier" South and the "Yankee" North, as William Taylor has so convincingly demonstrated. The abolitionists' demands for the immediate emancipation of all slaves accompanied the rising tide of proslavery sentiment and defense. During Hodge's adult life, most Americans acknowledged that human classes of slave and free were compounded with profound racist divisions between Black and White. Finally, and to Hodge's chagrin, Americans engaged in the most devastating war in all of American history, a civil war that seasoned historians have variously called "the second American Revolution," the "American Apocalypse" or "the irresistible conflict." Hodge, as we shall see, thought that awful war was none of these. An anguished Hodge, witnessing Presbyterians killing Presbyterians, labeled the war "a ghastly hallucination."

During Charles Hodge's lifetime America was, to use Jon Butler's phrase, "awash in a sea of faith." Indeed, this yeasty, turbulent, expansive era saw tremendous changes in America's religious scene, including revivalism and its attending theologies of premillennialism and radical reform; a vital "invisible institution" in the African diaspora of the South; the large immigration of Irish Roman Catholics; the numerical eclipse of old Protestant denominations such as Congregationalists, Episcopalians, and Presbyterians and the rapid rise of Baptists, Methodists, and Mormons; the inevitable split of every major denomination along North–South lines; and a diligent quest for new ways of doing Protestant theology such as Horace Bushnell's Romanticism, Charles G. Finney's hybrid Arminianism, and the tempered Reformed theologizing of Henry B. Smith. A still wider spectrum of mid-century voices in American

<sup>12</sup> Henry F. May summarizes my point even more succinctly. "It is in this period [i.e., of the nineteenth century] that the United States had opportunity, unparalleled among major modern nations, to work out her own political, economic and social destiny without serious fear of interference. If there is such a thing as a separate American culture, it is in this period that its early development is to be found." See Henry F. May, *Ideas, Faiths and Feelings: Essays on American Intellectual and Religious History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), pp. 195–196.



religion has been characterized by Henry May as "Progressive, Patriotic Protestantism." It was an era, he wrote, when modern American Protestantism emerged as "individualistic yet conformist, egalitarian but not revolutionary, millennial and perfectionist, and utterly un-European."<sup>13</sup>

At the same time, new directions in American science, philosophy, education, biblical, and historical studies intersected with the restlessness in American religious thought. By the time of Hodge's death in 1878, American Protestant theology was shaken to its foundations by these new currents of thought.<sup>14</sup> In short, Hodge lived through this "age of boundlessness" and energetically commented on many of its most fluid, baffling, and divisive issues. Few other American Reformed theologians exceeded the range of his discourses or the clarity of his critiques.

The following study will address but three of Hodge's many and prolonged discourses with America's antebellum intellectual establishment. Such a limited examination will thereby circumvent other significant dimensions of Hodge's thought: his contributions as a biblical scholar and commentator; his ecclesiology and commitments as a prominent churchman; his recasting of Reformed orthodoxy according to his philosophic assumptions in common sense realism; his polemic essays in the intramural issues of American theology; his role as interpreter of the Reformed doctrines within an American context; his place in the "trans-Atlantic" discourse between American and Continental theology (including his love-hate relationship with Schleiermacher); his popularization of Christianity (notably his *The Way of Life* [1841]); and his contributions as an editor of one of the premier religious journals in nineteenth-century America. And this does not, surprisingly, exhaust the range of his concerns. With the possible exception of Horace Bushnell, no other American theologian in the Reformed tradition approached Hodge's breadth of intellectual concerns. And no other Reformed theologian addressed those concerns in a manner quite like that of Charles Hodge.

<sup>13</sup> May, *Ideas, Faiths and Feelings*, pp. 171-173.

<sup>14</sup> The literature about this era of American religious history is enormous. For an older and enduring outline see A. M. Schlesinger, "A Critical Period of American Religion, 1875-1900," *Massachusetts Historical Society Proceedings* 64 (1930-1932): 523-548. For a wider appraisal of the demise of Calvinism, see Daniel Walker Howe, "The Decline of Calvinism: An Approach to Its Study," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 14 (January 1972): 306-327. For Presbyterian communities in America see Lefferts Loetscher, *The Broadening Church: A Study of Theological Issues in the Presbyterian Church Since 1869* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1957). For broader intellectual currents see: T. J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920* (New York, 1981); George Cotkin, *Reluctant Modernists* (Boston, 1992); and Bruce Kuklick, *Churchmen and Philosophers: From Jonathan Edwards to John Dewey* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985).



In this work, therefore, I shall address only three of Hodge's cultural discourses: 1) his understanding of Western science; 2) his dialogue with American literature and language; and 3) his controversial writings about the politics of slavery and the American Civil War. In clear and lucid prose, Hodge addressed each of these issues as a Reformed theologian, an informed scholar, and as a distinctively American commentator. And each of these, in turn, generated heated controversies and protracted disputes.

To put these three topics in proper context, I need first to make some preliminary comments about Hodge's personality and training. As with most, the theology and the man cannot be separated.

### PERSPECTIVES ON HODGE'S PERSONALITY AND HIS THEOLOGY

At least three dimensions of Hodge's personality influenced the contours and boundaries of his Reformed theologizing: his fatherless childhood; his capacities for making friends; and the excellence and influence of his European training. These personal experiences not only indentify Hodge but they also help clarify why he interpreted Reformed theology and American culture the way he did.

Charles Hodge was nurtured in the Christian faith in a devoutly Presbyterian home, but without his natural father. Born in December 1797, Charles Hodge acquired a vital, pious Christian faith much in the same way he acquired the English language. Under the early tutoring of his widowed mother, Hodge's earliest theological grammar was the vocabulary of the Psalms, New Testament, the Westminster Catechism. There is not a whiff of evidence that Hodge ever strayed from this earliest, powerful, loving catechesis.

His father, Hugh Hodge, was a prominent Philadelphia physician and Presbyterian elder, who served as a surgeon in the Revolutionary War. The elder Hodge was captured by the British and liberated only through the special intervention of General Washington. In 1798 Hugh Hodge died at the age of 43 while tending patients during a yellow fever epidemic that struck Philadelphia. Charles, who was only seven months old when his father died, grew up idolizing his deceased father's medical skills and patriotism. It is not surprising, therefore, that Charles acquired several surrogate fathers. The first was his older brother, Hugh Lenox Hodge, who later excelled as a Philadelphia physician and as a professor of women's medicine at the University of Pennsylvania. Hugh Lenox Hodge was Charles's closest male confidant, an inveterate letter writer and a convenient financier of Charles Hodge's minimal but frequent fiscal dilemmas. "My brother," Charles once wrote, "was far more than

a brother to me. Although only eighteen months my senior, he assumed from the first the office of guardian. He always went first in the dark. I never slept out of his arms until I was eleven or twelve years old."<sup>15</sup>

Archibald Alexander (1772–1851), the first professor at Princeton Seminary, was the second significant male authority figure for Charles.<sup>16</sup> Their lifelong relationship began while Charles was a student at Princeton College. Later, Hodge boarded with the Alexanders whose children, especially Joseph Addison Alexander and Joseph Waddel Alexander, also became Charles's lifelong friends and colleagues. Though Hodge disregarded Alexander's advice and went to Germany to study, Hodge rarely if ever wrote anything without the sanction of "Doctor" Alexander. Their relationship, Hodge often remarked, was like that of Paul and Timothy in the New Testament. In August 1827 Alexander wrote to Hodge in Germany, "I feel anxious to hear from you, to know how you are and what progress you make in the literature. You must come home loaded with riches. Much will be expected of you."<sup>17</sup> The twin overtones of a father and friend are not far from the surface here.<sup>18</sup> It is not surprising that Charles and Sarah Hodge would bypass their own families and name their first child, Archibald Alexander Hodge.

Furthermore, one needs to remember that Hodge's childhood years and adolescent years were spent in considerable poverty. When the family's modest inheritance and investments went sour, Mary Blanchard Hunt Hodge gathered her two sons and moved from Philadelphia to Princeton in 1812 in order to educate her two sons at Princeton College. Undoubtedly, it helped that her former Philadelphia pastor, Ashbel Green, was then serving as Presi-

<sup>15</sup> Quoted in Archibald A. Hodge, *Life of Charles Hodge* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1880), p. 11. Hereafter cited as *LCH*.

<sup>16</sup> The best biography of Alexander is Lefferts Loetscher's, *Facing the Enlightenment and Pietism: Archibald Alexander and the Founding of Princeton Theological Seminary* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1983).

<sup>17</sup> Quoted in *LCH*, p. 160. In this letter Alexander made a telling comment about Hodge. "I know that your mind was often oppressed by a sense of your own want of adequate qualification, and I was willing even desirous that you should visit Europe if it were for nothing else than to get cured of this inordinate and morbid impression. But pray come back as soon as you can . . . we greatly desire and need your presence" (*ibid.*, p. 160).

<sup>18</sup> Alexander's confidence was not ill-placed. Two decades later, in October 1851, Hodge was summoned to the deathbed of Alexander. After telling Hodge that there was little more he could accomplish, Alexander said quietly to Hodge "I want you to know that it has been my greatest privilege to have brought you forward." Deeply moved, Hodge kissed him and fell on his knees. Immediately after leaving, he wrote a memorandum to himself to remark the occasion and memory. See Hodge, "Memorandum to myself, Princeton, October 12, 1851," *APUL*. This memorandum appears, though in a slightly different form, in *LCH*, pp. 382–383.

dent of Princeton College.<sup>19</sup> She took in boarders and laundry to make ends meet and to garner funds to pay the boys' fees. Neither son readily forgot these boyhood hardships. It is not surprising that Hodge would often preach about the gospel's bias toward the poor and often scolded the Presbyterian church for its neglect of America's urban centers.<sup>20</sup>

Psycho-history is, at best, a precarious effort but the theological implications of Charles growing up fatherless and relatively impoverished are tantalizing to ponder. Whatever else characterizes Hodge's manner of thinking, he had a deep quest for structure, a holy passion for integration, and a distinct intolerance for ambiguity. Order rather than imagination, comprehensibility rather than novelty, the doctrines of Paul rather than the parables of the Gospels preoccupied his long career. Surely some of that style and quest for security was related to his rearing.

A second dimension to the interplay of Hodge's personality and theology was his quest for a community. Charles Hodge was, by all accounts, a gregarious person. If the cultivation of lifelong friendships is one of the surest indices of personal maturity and stability, Hodge excelled in making and maintaining friends. His amicable relationship with his physician brother, Hugh Lenox Hodge, lasted forty years. For long periods in their lives, the brothers exchanged letters weekly. Nine years after his close friend and fellow raconteur Albert B. Dod died, Hodge wrote in 1854 in Willam B. Sprague's *Annals of the American Pulpit* that he could not "cease to mourn his [Dod's] departure as a personal loss." Hodge had remained at his friend's bedside as Dod died.<sup>21</sup> A sixty-year friendship started in 1814 in college between Charles and John Johns, an Episcopalian bishop in Virginia and one-time President of William and Mary College. "Hail Columbia!" Hodge wrote to Johns in 1872, "Tell me what train you are coming in that I may meet you. I can't afford to lose one minute."<sup>22</sup> That same year (1872) witnessed an extraordinary event for American seminaries when hundreds of theologians and church officials, including many from abroad, gathered in Princeton to celebrate the fifty years

<sup>19</sup> Ashbel Green (1762–1848) was a graduate of the College of New Jersey (Princeton College), the Chaplain to the U.S. Congress (1792–1800), a prominent Presbyterian pastor in Philadelphia, a leader of a conservative wing in the Presbyterian denomination, founding president of Princeton Seminary board of directors and, finally, the President of Princeton College.

<sup>20</sup> See especially Charles Hodge, "Preaching the Gospel to the Poor," *BRPR* 43 (1871): 83–95. "It is with great reluctance that we are constrained to acknowledge that the Presbyterian Church in this country is not the church for the poor" (p. 86).

<sup>21</sup> See *LCH*, pp. 364–367.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 565.



of Hodge's teaching at the Seminary. When Leonard Woolsey, ex-president of Yale College, spoke of their long friendship that started in 1828, Hodge, crippled and needing a cane, walked across stage to the podium and kissed him. The American Lutheran theologian, Charles P. Krauth, once remarked that "next to having Dr. Hodge on one's side, was the pleasure of having him for an antagonist."<sup>23</sup>

That capacity and need for friendship had always been present. Hodge's unpublished journal of his travels in Europe 1826–1828 is replete with social occasions that Hodge either initiated or attended. In Paris, Halle, and Berlin he spent long afternoons and evenings visiting art galleries, accompanying prison chaplains on their "rounds," arguing endlessly, learning to drink beer, hiking with friends, and learning to sing a newly discovered German composer, J. S. Bach. When back in Princeton, a steady stream of guests regularly crowded (and taxed) the Hodge household. This same propensity led Hodge to establish "Association of Gentlemen" who acted in concert as an editorial board in the management of *The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review*. Hodge's voluminous personal correspondence as evidenced by the extant letters to nearly 400 persons attest to his extroverted personality. On a rare, if not unique occasion, the entire General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in May 1873, adjourned one afternoon and travelled from Baltimore to Washington in order to greet Hodge at his hotel after it had been reported that he was too sick to attend the Assembly in Baltimore.

However abbreviated, I mention these personal dimensions of Hodge's person to give flesh to my conviction that Hodge's way of doing theology was conditioned and nuanced by a distinct, viable community at Princeton Seminary. That congenial community encouraged, monitored, and helped publish much of what Hodge thought and wrote. In his *The Community of Interpreters*, Robert Corrington argues that hermeneutical paradigms in American theology, as distinct from those in German universities and *Lehrfreiheit*, are decisively shaped by ecclesial communities that command allegiance over long periods of time.<sup>24</sup> In what Corrington calls "horizontal hermeneutics," inter-

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., pp. 528, 616.

<sup>24</sup> Robert S. Corrington, *The Community of Interpreters: On the Hermeneutics of Nature and the Bible in the American Philosophical Tradition* (Macon, GA.: Mercer University Press, 1987). See also Bruce Kuklick, *The Rise of American Philosophy: Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1860–1930* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977).

Corrington applied this methodological context to the work of Charles Pierce and Josiah Royce, especially the latter's "beloved community" in *The Problem of Christianity* (1912). A similar case (though with different theological outcomes) could be made, I believe, for the Princeton theologians and Charles Hodge.

pretive dictates of American theologians were grounded in the cultural traits and ethos of the predominating community within which scholars worked. In this sense, most nineteenth-century American theological interpretation was "interpretation for another." It was especially so at Princeton.

As adopted son, younger colleague, friend, editor, and eventual premier advocate for the "Princeton Theology," Hodge participated in a community of ecclesial scholars who simultaneously nourished his personal identity and grounded his theological convictions. I suggest that Hodge's vaunted conservatism, for all of its theological, political, and social ramifications, was as much the result of his participation in a close-knit community as it was of his deeply rooted theological convictions. Rarely, if ever, did he exceed the boundaries of his community's ethos. His gregarious personality merely exacerbated this conscientious commitment to his "community of interpreters" in Princeton.

A third, and final, dimension of Hodge's background related to his training as a scholar. Charles Hodge's preparation as a native-born American theologian may have been without peer in nineteenth-century American Protestantism. During a highly formative decade (1820–1830), Charles Hodge emerged as one of America's best trained theologians. He travelled through New England, attended lectures at Yale and Harvard, and visited with America's foremost biblical scholar, Moses Stuart of Andover. In 1826, with his family under the care of his brother Hugh and his mother in Philadelphia and with his replacement (John Nevin) paid for, Hodge made the novel commitment to travel to France and Germany to study for two years. This European sojourn placed Hodge among the very earliest of American scholars who went to Continental universities for extended study of any kind. We have a fairly extensive reporting of his experiences there, especially his journal, the letters written in French to wife, Sarah, and his regular accounting to the elder Alexander. By any measure he accomplished much while abroad. He studied languages (Arabic, Persian, and Hebrew) with DeSacy in Paris and was tutored in French. Rather than going on to the University of Göttingen as originally intended, Hodge, for reasons not entirely clear, decided to go to the University of Halle to study with the famed Hebracist, W. Gesenius. While at Halle, Hodge learned of a young, learned biblical scholar and theologian, August Tholuck (1799–1877), who was acquiring an international reputation as a mediational theologian or *Vermittlungstheologie*.<sup>25</sup> Hodge soon struck up a

<sup>25</sup> For a brief and lively exposition of Tholuck's place in German theology see Karl Barth, *Protestant Theology*, chapter 16. Tholuck, claims Barth, "possessed an imposing array of learning, especially in oriental studies. He wrote several New Testament commentaries and a number of studies on the early history of rationalism. He distinguished himself by making the chief works

friendship with Tholuck that would last into the 1860s.<sup>26</sup> From Halle, Hodge often wrote home describing in detail the long, exhausting walks he took with Tholuck. Each hike centered on a particular theological doctrine or problem. As early as 1828, Hodge introduced Tholuck to American readers by translating several articles for *The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review*, including Tholuck's long exposition by Tholuck of the history of theology in the eighteenth century and polemical rejoinders to deism and pantheism. Hodge's lifelong antipathy to deism and pantheism ("neologies") was surely enhanced by Tholuck's influence.<sup>27</sup>

In Halle's university, pubs, and prayer meetings, Hodge's firsthand facility with the German language and culture accelerated quickly. At the urging of Tholuck, Hodge went to Berlin, where his training broadened even more. He attended the lectures of the erudite but conservative biblical scholar W. Hengstenberg, and wrote home that the Prussian Hengstenberg would be difficult for Americans to appreciate. In addition to attending the Royal Academy of Sciences,<sup>28</sup> he went to hear the lectures and sermons of Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834) and apparently conversed at length with the famed Berlin theologian. Few American theologians in the 1820s ever savored such exposure to German scholarship. Hodge's experiences in Germany commingled with his earlier training at Princeton College and Seminary. As early as 1828

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of Calvin available again in cheap editions . . ." (ibid., p. 509). For an important discussion of Tholuck's influence of American theology in the nineteenth century see Walter Conser, *God and the Natural World: Religion and Science in Antebellum America* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1993), pp. 50ff. "Many Americans found Tholuck's blend of pietism and learning, personal solicitude and visible spirituality, a comfortable answer to their doubts and a powerful vindication of their decision to come to German in the first place" (ibid., p. 53).

<sup>26</sup> In 1872, while writing his *Systematic Theology*, Hodge reflected on the earlier influence of Tholuck:

The writer [i.e., Hodge] was once sitting with Tholuck in a public garden, when the latter said, "I turn my eyes in the opposite direction, and still I am conscious of your presence. How is that?" The [i.e., Hodge's] reply was, "You know the fact that I am here; and that knowledge produces the state of mind, you call a consciousness of my presence." Tholuck good naturedly rejoined, "O how stupid that is. Don't you believe that there is an influence which streams forth from me to you and you to me?" The only answer was, "Perhaps so." Of all the genial, lovely and loving men whom the writer [Hodge] in the course of a long life has met, Tholuck stand among the very first. The writer derived more good from him than from all other sources combined during his two year sojourn in Europe. (Vol. 2., pp. 451–452)

<sup>27</sup> See *Biblical Repertory* 4 (1828): 9–242. Later another prominent theologian, the immigrant Philip Schaff, who had also studied with Tholuck at Halle, conveyed Tholuck's work to American audiences. In Hodge's several sparrings with Schaff, Hodge never forgot what he and Schaff had in common.

<sup>28</sup> According to Hodge's journal, one afternoon of lecturers at the Academy included Ritter (the geologist), Schleiermacher, Enke (an astronomer), and Humbolt (the geographer) who read a paper on "The Analogy of Languages." See *LCH*, pp. 152ff.



the essential ingredients of the “Old Princeton Theology” began to take shape and energy.<sup>29</sup>

When all of these personal and academic dimensions in Hodge are tallied and blended—the fatherless upbringing, his gregariousness, and his excellent training in Germany—Hodge’s way of doing theology becomes more understandable. It is simply ill-informed to conclude that Hodge merely and laboriously repristinated F. Turretin. Significantly different in temperament and agenda from the Protestant scholastics, Hodge’s distinctively American way was inherently mediatorial and, not infrequently, pragmatic as well as confessional.<sup>30</sup> I contend that Tholuck’s *Vermittlungstheologie* was immensely influential on Hodge’s theology and praxis.<sup>31</sup> Hodge consistently sought to reconcile differences in American scientific, political, and ecclesial controversies. Energizing those mediating positions, I believe, were emotional and communal forces as well as his biblical and theological convictions. Of course he rejected those positions that were outright inimical to his understanding of Christianity, but to those diverse and competing positions within the “pale of the faith” Hodge, more often than not, sought the *via media*. One misreads Hodge, in my opinion, if he is seen merely as a dried out scholastic and encrusted “defensor fidei.” Neither can he be dismissed as either a myopic bib-

<sup>29</sup> For a preliminary exposition of this school of American Reformed theology see my article “Princeton Theology” in *Encyclopedia of the Reformed Faith*, Donal McKim, ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knos Press, 1992), pp. 303–304. Consider also Mark Noll, *The Princeton Theology, 1812–1921* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1983). In an important essay George Marsden endeavors to locate these Princeton theologians in the broader environment of American Reformed tradition. See Marsden, “Introduction: Reformed and American” in *Reformed Theology in America: The Princeton Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1989), pp. 1–12.

<sup>30</sup> In a sermon during the crises times of 1860, Hodge preached in the Oratory at the Seminary to a group of gathered students. The sermon was entitled “The Tender Mercies of God,” based on Psalm 146, but he began with this *via media* introduction:

There are two ways of conceiving God, the philosophical and the religious, as he [God] stands related to reasons and as he stands related to the heart. . . . Both these are right, so far as limited and determined by the Scriptures. The one limits the other. If we press the philosophical method so far as to lose the object of the religious affections, we end in Atheism. If we let our affections have full scope we lose the infinite and absolutely perfect, as did the mystic enthusiasts. In the Bible both elements are harmonized; though the latter is the predominant, as it should be with us. (Charles Hodge, *Princeton Sermons: Outlines of Discourses, Doctrinal and Practical, Delivered at Princeton Theological Seminary on Sabbath Afternoons* [London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1879], p. 14)

<sup>31</sup> Extant letters exchanged between Tholuck and Hodge and the articles by Tholuck that were published for American antebellum audiences in the *Biblical Repository* and *Princeton Review* attest to Hodge’s indebtedness to Tholuck. Later, in 1872 when Hodge published his *Systematic Theology*, he had some harsh words for *Vermittlungstheologie*. It had become, said Hodge, an “attempt to combine conclusions of modern speculation with Christian doctrine, or rather with Christianity. It is an attempt to mix incongruous elements which refuse to enter into combination.” Hodge, *ST*, vol. 2, p. 452.

licist or as a "founding father" of American fundamentalism as, for example, Ernest Sandeen has done.<sup>32</sup> Rather, Hodge's approach was to search for a center on which Reformed theology could mediate between extremes and thereby leverage its influence in a very wide arena of intellectual and cultural challenges: science and religion, faith and piety, Scripture and biblical criticism, politics and church, slavery and abolitionism, revivalism and ecclesial communities, and denominational exclusiveness and ecumenical discourse.

As we shall see, this reconciling nature surfaced dramatically in Hodge's frantic and futile efforts in the early 1860s to maintain the unity of the Presbyterian Church rather than join the "broken church, broken nation" syndrome.<sup>33</sup> One place to begin to examine Hodge's "search for balance" (to use Merle Curti's phrase) is in his long discourse with Western science. To that large topic we now turn.

<sup>32</sup> Ernest Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), chapter 5.

<sup>33</sup> Another example of this mediatorial bent in Hodge's thought was his role in ecumenical dialogues. In 1868 American Presbyterians were invited by Pope Pious IX to attend the first Vatican Council. Eventually, the task of writing a reply to Pope Pious IX's letter of invitation became Hodge's assignment. This document once again reveals this irenic tendency. In a day and nation when most Protestant-Catholic dialogue was vicious, exclusivistic and replete with triumphalist caricatures, Hodge argued that all persons—together with their children—who call Jesus Savior and Lord are to be considered within the visible and invisible Church. Following the decision and instructions of the 1869 General Assembly, he did say why Presbyterians would not attend the Council. The letter's tone and manner of expression exhibited Hodge's unwillingness to offend unnecessarily.



## II

### Charles Hodge and American Science

#### FORMATIVE INFLUENCES

While Archibald Alexander's cultural perspectives were forged in Virginia, and Samuel Miller's mind was honed as he circulated among the literati in the salons of New York City, Charles Hodge's earliest intellectual milieu was located in Philadelphia. According to historians Henry F. May and John C. Greene, Philadelphia functioned as America's cultural and scientific center in the early days of the Republic and fulfilled (on a smaller scale) for Americans some of the functions of London and Paris.<sup>34</sup> Under the promptings of Benjamin Franklin, the College of Pennsylvania was the first college in America whose curriculum was not derived from the medieval English tradition nor intended to serve an overtly religious purpose. Natural Philosophy (science) was central to its curricular offerings in the 1750s. The erstwhile Presbyterian, Benjamin Rush, freshly returned from medical studies at the University of Edinburgh, joined the faculty in 1769 as the first American professor of chemistry and brought to Philadelphia's savants some of the wide-ranging intellectual energies of the Scottish Enlightenment. Rush was also a good friend of the Hodge family. By the end of the century, Rush had emerged as a major force in early American science and medicine.<sup>35</sup> Philadelphia also served as

<sup>34</sup> Henry F. May, *The Enlightenment in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), especially chapter 3 and John C. Greene, *American Science in the Age of Jefferson* (Ames, IA: University of Iowa Press, 1984), chapter 2.

<sup>35</sup> See especially the work by Richard B. Sher and Jeffrey R. Smitten, eds., *Scotland and America in the Age of Enlightenment* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990). It is indispensable for placing Philadelphia—and Princeton—in the cultural milieu of the Scottish Enlightenment of the eighteenth century. With regard to the Scottish Enlightenment and Philadelphia medical science see Deborah C. Brunton, "The Transfer of Medical Education: Teaching at the Edinburgh and Philadelphia Medical School," in Sher and Smitten, *Scotland and America*, chapter

the seat of the American Philosophical Society, which was founded in 1769 and modeled after the Royal Society in London. John Adams once quaintly referred to Philadelphia as "the pineal gland of the republic," alluding to Descartes' notion that the pineal gland was the meeting place of mind and matter.

Charles Hodge's family roots and cultural identity were planted and nourished in that city's *mentalités*. Hugh Hodge, the physician father of Charles, circulated freely in Philadelphia's cultural circles during the last half of the eighteenth century. His sons would do the same in the middle decades of the nineteenth.<sup>36</sup> Hugh Lennox Hodge, Charles's older brother and Philadelphia physician, joined the American Philosophical Society in 1821 and was appointed professor of medicine at the University of Pennsylvania in 1835, where he pioneered in the undeveloped fields of gynecology and obstetrics. As the *Life of Charles Hodge* amply attests, Hugh Lennox Hodge kept Charles appraised of his own and others' research. As we shall see later, Hugh and Charles commented frequently about America's earliest studies in cultural anthropology, especially those of the physician/phrenologist Samuel G. Morton.<sup>37</sup>

Charles enrolled at the College of New Jersey (hereafter, Princeton College) in 1812, intending to study medicine with his brother. While the deepest reasons for Charles's switching to theology remain uncharted, his lifelong connections to the American science networks of his day were formed early. Those connections thickened when the widow of the famed science savant of Philadelphia, Dr. William Bache, the grandson of Benjamin Franklin, moved into the Hodge family residence. As noted earlier Charles's widowed mother had moved to Princeton in 1812 to provide for the education of her sons. Among the Bache children who joined the Hodge household was Sarah, then only fourteen years of age. Nine years later in 1822, Charles married Sarah

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14. I am also indebted to Douglas Sloan, *The Scottish Enlightenment and the American College Ideal* (New York, NY: Teachers College Press, 1971), especially chapter 6, "From Nottingham Academy to the 'Edinburgh of America': Benjamin Rush."

<sup>36</sup> Charles's father, Hugh Hodge (d. 1797), graduated from the College of New Jersey (Princeton College) in 1773 and practiced medicine in Philadelphia. Serving as a surgeon for an eastern battalion, he was captured by the British, held prisoner, and eventually returned to Philadelphia to resume his practice. He died in 1797 during a yellow-fever epidemic. A lifelong friend of Benjamin Rush, the elder Hodge was probably a member of the American Philosophical Society.

<sup>37</sup> "My brother was far more than a brother to me," wrote Charles Hodge in an unpublished journal. "Although only eighteen months my senior, he assumed from the first the office of guardian. He always went first in the dark. I never slept out of his arms until I was eleven or twelve years old" (*LCH*, p. 11).

Bache, a great-granddaughter of Franklin.<sup>38</sup> Hodge's long association with the Bache family surely informed and shaped his views about American science. Few Philadelphia scientists were better known in America and abroad than Alexander Dallas Bache (Sarah Bache Hodge's cousin), a chemist and physicist at the College of Pennsylvania, President of Girard College, regent of the Smithsonian Institute and first President of the National Academy of Sciences. In short, Charles Hodge had personal ties with Philadelphia's scientific community, which helps explain his lifetime interests in American science.

Augmenting Hodge's early exposures to Philadelphia's scientific communities, three personalities at Princeton's college and seminary deeply influenced the young Hodge's understanding of science: Samuel Stanhope Smith, Samuel Miller, and Archibald Alexander. Mark Noll's finely honed book, *Princeton and the Republic, 1768–1822*, weaves a narrative about the Witherspoon–Smith era at Princeton College precisely at the time when Charles Hodge and his brother were enrolled as students. Noll argues that John Witherspoon (president of Princeton College from 1768–1795) brought the college into the mainstream of eighteenth-century education.<sup>39</sup> Witherspoon's successor (and son-in-law), Samuel Stanhope Smith (1750–1819) embraced the Scottish common sense realism that Witherspoon enshrined at Princeton College and broadened the legacy of Witherspoon. Smith appointed the college's (and the nation's) first professor of chemistry, the Scot John Maclean, and reduced students' requirements in classical languages to accommodate more study in natural philosophy (i.e., science), or so he said to Benjamin Rush.<sup>40</sup> What set Smith apart from Witherspoon, claims Mark Noll, was Smith's increased emphasis on science in the college's curriculum. Smith was "mesmerized by Newton's accomplishments and those of other natural scientists," notes Noll.<sup>41</sup> That comment is not lost when Noll later observes that Charles Hodge's "mental abilities, his approach to the world of thought, and his intellectual ambition" resembled Smith's.<sup>42</sup>

In 1810 Smith issued a second edition of his earlier book, *Essay on the Causes*

<sup>38</sup> See *LCH*, p. 29. Charles's brother Hugh later wrote that Sarah was "well-grown, in blooming health, handsome, full of imagination, and exceedingly enthusiastic . . . a most agreeable companion. It is no wonder, therefore, that she soon won the love of my brother Charles. . . ."

<sup>39</sup> Mark Noll, *Princeton and the Republic, 1768–1822* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), p. 47.

<sup>40</sup> For a discussion about the science curriculum at Princeton College, see Herbert Hovenkamp, *Science and Religion in America, 1800–1860* (Philadelphia, 1978), chapter 1.

<sup>41</sup> Noll, *Princeton and the Republic*, p. 191.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 290.



of the Variety of Complexion and Figure in the Human Species.<sup>43</sup> In this early American exploration in cultural anthropology, Smith entered a heated scientific controversy of his day—the dispute over the origins and physical nature of humanity. Smith's work must have made a profound impression on the youthful Charles for that gnawing issue would preoccupy Hodge down to his famous tract of 1874 *What is Darwinism?* Methodologically, Smith's *Essay* defended the legitimacy of linking divine revelation and scientific investigation. At the same time, Smith clearly differentiated between “hypothesis” and “fact.” Hypothesizing, Smith warned, ran the risk of “philosophic delirium,” since hypotheses were the malleable products of human calculation and imagination. In contrast, objective “facts” provided dependable, solid foundations for scientific endeavors, especially as those facts were ordered inductively according to Lord Bacon's canons. True knowledge—be it knowledge of God, nature, or the self—was one unified, compatible, cohesive, inductive enterprise. T. D. Bozeman makes the astute comment that this widespread mistrust of conjecture and a heavy esteem for facts and objective knowledge placed fixed boundaries upon human reason and imagination while preserving a harmony between scientific and religious views of the world.<sup>44</sup>

Samuel Miller (1791–1850) of New York City was another scholar-clergyman who significantly broadened Hodge's networks in American culture and science.<sup>45</sup> Before he was elected as the second professor at Princeton Seminary in 1813, Miller had already attained a considerable reputation as a cultural savant while a Presbyterian pastor in New York City, especially with the publication of his *A Brief Retrospect of the Eighteenth Century* (1803).<sup>46</sup>

<sup>43</sup> For a modern reproduction of Smith's work, along with copious notes and introductory material, see the edition edited by Winthrop D. Jordan, *Essay on the Causes of the Variety . . .* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965). For an excellent discussion of Smith's work and its American context and notoriety in London and Edinburgh, see John C. Greene, *Science in the Age of Jefferson* (Ames, IA: University of Iowa Press, 1984), chapter 7. Smith's researches, Greene notes, were originally shared with the members of the American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia in 1787 where Smith was elected to membership two years later.

<sup>44</sup> Bozeman's discussion of widespread suspicion of “conjecture and speculation” in antebellum America is especially insightful. See Theodore Dwight Bozeman, *Protestants in the Age of Science: The Baconian Ideal and Antebellum American Religious Thought* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1977), pp. 101ff.

<sup>45</sup> Samuel Miller's life and thought remains unexamined. No critical biography of this seminal Princeton theologian is available. Recent estimates of the Princeton Theology continue to bypass him. For a brief summary of Miller's life and scholarly efforts, see Anita Schorsch, “Samuel Miller, Renaissance Man: His Legacy of ‘True Taste,’ *American Presbyterians: Journal of Presbyterian History*, 66 (Summer 1988): 71–87. An earlier biography was written by Miller's son, Samuel Miller, *The Life of Samuel Miller, D.D., LL.D.* (Philadelphia, 1869).

<sup>46</sup> For two different appraisals see Gilbert Chinard, “A Land Mark in American Intellectual History: Samuel Miller's *A Brief Retrospect of the Eighteenth Century*,” *The Princeton University Chron-*

John Higham once called this two-volume work the first bona fide history of ideas published in America.<sup>47</sup> It stands as the frontal piece of the "Princeton Theology." Its wide-ranging agenda and dazzling erudition served as a model—and burden—for doing Reformed theology at Princeton. Miller's encyclopedic-like book exhibited the confidence that no final antagonism existed between the Christian religion and all sound learning, especially science. "Never was there a period," wrote Miller, "of the same extent [i.e., the eighteenth century] . . . that the information and the doctrines contained in the sacred volume were so perfectly harmonized with the most authentic discoveries, and the sound principles of science."<sup>48</sup>

Archibald Alexander was the third and surely the most formidable, influence on the adolescent Hodge. Hodge always addressed him as "Doctor" and was overtly uncomfortable when he differed with his mentor, which was not very often. Alexander, as his biographer and other scholars have well documented, possessed more than a casual acquaintance with antebellum scientific inquiry. He had been tutored by William Graham, an amateur scientist, who in turn conveyed to Alexander an ardor for "the Newtonian system." While president of Hampden-Sydney College in Virginia, Alexander taught science.

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icle, 14 (Winter 1953): 55–71 and Terrance Martin, *The Instructed Vision: Scottish Common Sense Philosophy and the Origin of American Literature* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1961), pp. 74ff. In volume one of the *Brief Retrospect*, Miller surveyed the following scientific topics: 1) Mechanical Philosophy (Electricity, Galvanism, Magnetism . . . Hydrology, Pneumatics, Optics, Astronomy); 2) Chemical Philosophy; 3) Natural History (Zoology, Botany, Mineralogy, Geology, Meteorology, Hydrology); 4) Medicine; 5) Geography. In volume two he traced issues in Philosophy, Fine Arts, Classical Literature, Oriental Literature, Modern Languages, Philosophy of Language, History, Biography, Romances and Novels, Poetry, Journals, Encyclopaedias, Education, and Notes. For an evaluation of Miller's exposition of eighteenth-century science, see Jacob Susskind, "Samuel Miller's Intellectual History of the Eighteenth Century," *Journal of Presbyterian History* 49 (1971): 15–31. It should also be noted that Edward Miller, Samuel's brother, was the co-editor of the *Medical Repository*, which John Greene calls the nearest thing to a general scientific journal in the United States at the time. See Greene, *Science in the Age of Jefferson*, p. 170.

<sup>47</sup> John Higham, *Writing American History* (Bloomington, IN: University of Indiana Press, 1970), pp. 44ff. For reasons that evade me, several contemporary surveys of the "Old Princeton Theology" completely neglect Samuel Miller. Neither Mark Noll nor David Wells include much of him in their essays and anthologies. See Mark Noll, ed., *The Princeton Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1983) and David F. Wells, ed., *Reformed Theology in America: The Princeton Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1989).

<sup>48</sup> This quote is from the final section, entitled "Recapitulation" of Samuel Miller's *A Brief Retrospect of the Eighteenth Century*, vol. 2 (New York, 1803), p. 434. Earlier, in volume 1 (p. 76), at the end of a section on Mechanical Science, Miller entered and endorsed a quote from one Bishop Watson:

Well did Lord Bacon compare natural philosophy [science] to a pyramid; its basis is indeed the history of nature, of which we know a little and conjecture much; but its top is, without a doubt, hid high among the clouds. It is *the work which God worketh from beginning to end*, infinite and inscrutable. [Italics in original]

Joseph Henry, founding director of the Smithsonian Institution and a former professor of natural science at Princeton College, remembered that Alexander was "much interested in all questions of physical science and participated in the researches [in electromagnetism] in which I was engaged."<sup>49</sup>

Alexander's science, however, was instrumental to his evidentialism. Alexander employed scientific publications to buttress and illuminate the evidences for God and God's providential ways in nature:

A just and impartial consideration of the universe, cannot fail to lead the sincere seeker of the truth to the opinion, that there must be a great first cause, powerful and intelligent, who has made the world for some particular end. As sound reason would constrain us, if we should find a curiously contrived machine, evidently formed for a useful purpose, to ascribe it to an intelligent artificer, how can we refuse to ascribe the structure of the universe, in which the evidences of design are more numerous and more striking, infinitely, than any works of men, to a wise and powerful architect? . . . If we resist these [evidences], no other proofs would answer any purpose in removing their incredulity.<sup>50</sup>

Alexander's evidentialist perspectives, echoing William Paley's "argument from design" in *Natural Theology* (1802), undoubtedly permeated Hodge's views about science.<sup>51</sup> This strain of evidentialist thinking surfaced frequently in Hodge's encounters with American scientists, though Hodge's knowledge of science was vastly superior to Alexander's. John Wells, however, has issued a caution regarding these Old Princeton scholars' assumptions. Smith, Miller, and Alexander were first biblical, not natural, theologians. Their faith in God rested primarily on the witness of Scriptures. When they defended a transcendent design in the natural order it was because of their prior belief in God. They did not believe in God merely from the structures and designs within the natural universe.<sup>52</sup> Long before Hodge ever heard

<sup>49</sup> See Lefferts A. Loetscher, *Facing the Enlightenment and Pietism: Archibald Alexander and the Founding of Princeton Theological Seminary*. Henry's quote is cited in Bozeman, *Protestants in the Age of Science*, pp. 40–41.

<sup>50</sup> Archibald Alexander, "The Bible, A Key to the Phenomena of the Natural World," *BRPR* 1 (1829): 101–120. This article by Alexander is partially reproduced in Noll, *Princeton Theology*, 92–104. See also, Archibald Alexander, "The Evidences of Christianity," *BRPR* 2 (1830): 218–240.

<sup>51</sup> Paley's book probably outsold all other English language textbooks on "natural theology." One American historian extrapolates Paley's evidentialism like this: "Nature led to God as surely as the shinbone led to the anklebone. The complex pattern in which the 446 known muscles overlap, enclose, and perforate each other could hardly have been by chance: such exquisite design point to a high order of 'mediation and counsel.'" See James Turner, *Without God, Without Creed: The Origins of Unbelief in America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1985), p. 96.

<sup>52</sup> John C. Wells, "Charles Hodge's Critique of Darwinism: The Argument To Design" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1986).



about God's design in nature—or the want of it—he had already memorized at his mother's knee the Psalms and Westminster's Shorter Catechism. Such Augustinian-Calvinistic commitments required sober limitations on human capacities, including rational ones. "The knowledge of God," Alexander proclaimed in his 1812 Inaugural Address, "which could be derived from a view of his works would not be sufficient for man, even in a state of innocence; and much less so when he [man] had fallen into sin."<sup>53</sup> In this sense even the young Ralph Waldo Emerson had these evidentialist perspectives right when he shrewdly observed, "Paley's deity and Calvin's deity are plainly two beings."<sup>54</sup> Yet at Princeton Seminary these two deities conversed, at least until Darwin intervened.

### THE PRINCETON PARADIGM

Following Hodge's return from Europe, he recast his fledgling journal, giving it the new name of *The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review*. Between 1830 and 1850, while husbanding the journal through crises and controversies, Hodge's earlier perspectives about science matured. Those earlier influences—family, education, and mentors—combined to insure that Hodge appropriated a particular kind of American science, a genre that I shall call the *Princeton paradigm*. However trendy paradigmatic rhetoric appears, the Kuhnian model remains appropriate and useful for understanding Hodge and his colleagues.<sup>55</sup> This antebellum Princeton paradigm mixed, I contend, three interactive ingredients: 1) an epistemological grounding in the Scottish common sense realism of Thomas Reid; 2) a commitment to a "doxological science"

<sup>53</sup> This address of Alexander is reprinted in Mark Noll, *The Princeton Theology*, pp. 73–91. The above quote is on p. 87.

<sup>54</sup> To support Well's caution, see Archibald Alexander's larger "evidentialist" effort in his *A Brief Outline of the Evidence of the Christian Religion* (Princeton, 1825) and *Evidences of the Authenticity, Inspiration and Canonical Authority of the Holy Scriptures* (Philadelphia, 1826). See also, Gordon E. Jackson, "Archibald Alexander's *Thoughts on Religious Experience*, a Critical Revisiting," *Journal of Presbyterian History* 51 (1973): 141–153. James W. Alexander, Archibald's son, continued his father's evidentialist perspectives in an essay on Mark Hopkins. See James W. Alexander, "Lectures on the Evidence of Christianity" *BRPR* 18 (1846): 359–376. The quote from Emerson is cited in Turner, *Without God*, p. 81.

<sup>55</sup> I use the word in the tradition of Thomas Kuhn who argued that paradigms provide communities with a shared set of assumptions, principles, beliefs, and values which help to order and give meaning to the community's experience and practices. See Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970) and David Hollinger, "T.S. Kuhn's Theory of Science and Its Implications for History," *American Historical Review* 78 (1973): 370–393. I am also indebted to Walter H. Conser, *God and the Natural World: Religion and Science in Antebellum America* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1993), pp. 4ff.

that assumed no insurmountable demarcation between science and religion; and 3) a growing notion that theology itself was understood and pursued as a science. Any exegesis of Hodge's understanding of science invariably encounters these "prior-assumptions" and some brief exposition of their content is required.

Samuel Miller, in the *Brief Retrospect*, christened Scottish common sense realism "the paramount tribunal for all appeals of philosophy."<sup>56</sup> Its Princeton, if not American, Moses was the immigrant Scot Presbyterian clergyman John Witherspoon, who in 1768 began catechizing nearly three decades of students at the Princeton College, among whom were such notables as James Madison, Aaron Burr, and Benjamin Rush.<sup>57</sup> The Witherspoon legacy—and Hodge's absorption of it—influenced a whole generation of American scholars.<sup>58</sup> This epistemological tradition undeniably shapes all of Hodge's thinking, including his assessment of American science.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>56</sup> Miller, *Brief Retrospect*, Vol. 2, pp. 10–12.

<sup>57</sup> Exactly a century later, in 1868, Hodge chaired the committee that brought another Scottish philosopher and churchman, James McCosh, to the college presidency. The *BRPR* ran a review of McCosh's work as early as 1851. See Lyman Atwater, "The Method of Divine Government. . . by James McCosh." *BRPR* 23 (1851): 598–624. The standard biography for McCosh remains J. D. Hoeveler, *James McCosh and the Scottish Intellectual Tradition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981).

<sup>58</sup> Scottish realism's hegemony reigned largely uncontested in American intellectual and academic circles until mid-century when the critiques of J. S. Mill, Immanuel Kant, and Charles Pierce emerged and significantly broadened "mainline" American philosophy. See especially the authoritative work by Elizabeth Flower and Murray G. Murphey, *A History of Philosophy in America*, vol. 1 (New York: Capricorn Books, 1977), chapters 4, 5, and 6. These authors record the "jaundiced appraisals" of Scottish common sense realism by historians of American philosophical thought. Flower and Murphey claim, however, that they want to be "character witnesses for the much libeled realists." They contend that Scottish realism was not only an American bridge between the Enlightenment and pragmatism but that Scottish common sense realism also helped determine the way Kantian philosophy was to be utilized (*ibid.*, pp. 203–204). It is my contention that: 1) this same Scottish philosophy placed an indelible character on American Reformed theology in the nineteenth century; and 2) that the Princeton theologians' utter reliance on its epistemological groundings place Hodge in the center, rather than at the periphery, of American philosophical orthodoxy.

<sup>59</sup> The literature about Scottish common sense realism in America, already considerable, is expanding rapidly due to the recent "Reid renaissance" associated with contemporary, "anti-foundationalist" philosophers. Ronald E. Beanblossom and Keith Leher have edited an abridgement of Reid's writings in *Thomas Reid's Inquiry and Essays* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Press, 1983). For a thoughtful introductory treatment of Reid see Keith Leher, *Thomas Reid* (New York: Routledge Press, 1989). A collection of essays entitled *The Philosophy of Thomas Reid*, Melvin Dagarno and Reic Matthews, eds. (Dordrecht and Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1989) reveal the scope of the contemporary discussion about Reid. Manfred Kuehn, *Scottish Common Sense in Germany, 1768–1800* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1987) shows the influence of Reid on Kant. For the particular interest in the relationship of this Scottish philosophy and the methodologies of science and the roles played by analogies and models in the formation



In an insightful work, Terrence Martin once characterized Scottish realism as a "metaphysics of actuality."<sup>60</sup> In a *locus classicus* Thomas Reid, the premier figure in Scottish realism, argued in his *An Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principle of Common Sense* (1764) the following epistemic axiom:

Every operation of the senses, in its very nature, implies a judgment or belief, as well as simple apprehension. . . . When I perceive a tree before me, my faculty of seeing gives me not only a notion or simple apprehension of the tree, but a belief of its existence, and of its figure, distance, and magnitude; and this judgement or belief [i.e., in the tree's existence] is not got by comparing ideas, it is included in the very nature of the perception. . . . Such original and natural judgements are, therefore, a part of that furniture which Nature hath given to human understanding. They [i.e., these judgements or beliefs] are the inspiration of the Almighty, no less than our notions or simple apprehensions. They are a part of our constitution; and all discoveries of our reason are grounded upon them. They make up what is called *the common sense of mankind*; and, what is manifestly contrary to any of those first principles, is what we call *absurd*. The strength of them is *good sense*, which is often in those who are not acute in reasoning. A remarkable deviation from them, arising from a disorder of the constitution, is what we call *lunacy*; as when a man believes that he is made of glass. When a man suffers himself to be reasoned out of the principles of common sense, by metaphysical arguments, we may call this *metaphysical lunacy* . . . it is apt to seize the patient in solitary and speculative moments; but when he enters into society, Common Sense recovers her authority. [Reid's italics]<sup>61</sup>

Implied in this epistemological axiom was an explicit and sharp separation of subject and object. It also presumed that humans neither "created" the real world nor are they able to alter it, much less deconstruct it. Olson suggests that the great quest of Scottish philosophers was to establish a basis for uncontaminated knowledge on which a scientific methodology could be established.<sup>62</sup> For anything to be known, it must be known *in itself*, purely, directly, and unambiguously. Moreover, such immediate and foundational knowledge about the external world can be readily accessible to any human

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of scientific theories, see Richard Olson, *Scottish Philosophy and British Physics, 1750–1880: A Study in the Foundations of the Victorian Scientific Style* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975).

<sup>60</sup> Terrence Martin, *The Instructed Vision: Scottish Common Sense Philosophy and the Origin of American Literature* (Bloomington, IN: University of Indiana Press, 1961), p. 85.

<sup>61</sup> *Thomas Reid's Inquiry and Essays*, pp. 118–119. For an expanded treatment of this section of Reid's *Inquiry* see Keith Leher, *Thomas Reid* (London, 1989), pp. 26–80.

<sup>62</sup> Olson, *Scottish Philosophy and British Physics*, chapter 2.

observer, anywhere. Accordingly, science's agenda was confined to a concentration on actually existing objects. Reid-based science sanctioned only perceivable entities. Methodologically, it pursued only what conscious perception revealed to the mind. As John Passmore once observed, such an epistemological grounding of science was inherently conservative because it tended to spurn the novel and concentrate on the "less adventurous."<sup>63</sup> Consequently, when Old School Presbyterians like Hodge employed the words "facts" or "natural facts" with reference to scientific inquiry, we should, I contend, interpret their use of those terms in light of these Reidian common sense epistemological assumptions. "Truth," decreed Ashbel Green, the Hodge family pastor and Hodge's teacher at Princeton College, was "the real nature of things in themselves."<sup>64</sup>

Hodge and his colleagues sought to link these epistemological foundations to an American-styled methodology for science. From 1840 to 1860 Samuel Tyler led the way with no less than thirteen articles in *The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review*, each one defining and defending the linkages between Scottish common sense realism, Reformed theology, and Bacon's methodologies. In this Princeton schema, scientific inquiry meant fitting the human mind to the objective facts of nature, patiently, precisely, comprehensively. With an attending beatification of Francis Bacon's inductive methods, antebellum science at Princeton created a mode of inquiry that confined science to the parameters of stark, raw "facts," forcing thereby all human hypotheses into a "chaste . . . and legal wedlock with things in themselves."<sup>65</sup>

The famed introductory section of Hodge's *Systematic Theology* (1872-1873) merely summarized what he held intact throughout his long career:

The man of science comes to the study of nature with certain assumptions. . . . [Hodge then makes explicit three common sense principles that undergird the scientific inquiry.] The student of nature having this ground on which to stand . . . proceeds to perceive, gather and combine

<sup>63</sup> John Passmore, *A Hundred Years of Philosophy* (London, 1957), p. 28. It was, of course, this inherent "primitivism" which received the scorn of John Stuart Mill in his attack on the Scottish philosopher, William Hamilton.

<sup>64</sup> Quoted in Bozeman, *Protestants in the Age of Science*, p. 57.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17. Bozeman continues:

The scientist, then, need be capable only of winnowing his senses for factual raw material and of performing a set of quasi-mechanical operations upon it. Here was not the place for unsystematic lurchings of reason and imagination beyond the immediately presented evidence; in order to meet the test of sense, an explanatory concept must represent something that had been directly experienced.

See also Bozeman's perceptive paragraphs entitled "Natural 'fact' versus 'reasoning' in science" (*ibid.*, pp. 103ff).

facts. These [facts] he does not pretend to manufacture, nor presume to modify. He must take them as they are. He is only careful to be sure that they are real, and that he has them all, or, at least, all that are necessary to justify any inference which he may draw from them, or any theory which he may build on them.<sup>66</sup>

A second ingredient of the Princeton paradigm might well be termed “doxological science,” that felicitous phrase used in Bozeman’s *Protestants in the Age of Science*. Doxological science was a way of envisioning any ongoing scientific movement as a quest for the harmony of science and religion. “Philosophy, revelation, natural theology and physical science,” Samuel Tyler wrote exuberantly in *The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review*, “are united in perfect harmony, proclaiming with one voice that there is a God.”<sup>67</sup> “It was,” as Basil Wiley once noted, a “peculiarly English phenomenon, this holy alliance between science and religion.”<sup>68</sup> Hodge’s journal quoted liberally and deferentially from the *Bridgewater Treatises*, the British expression of doxological science, and these Old Princeton theologians virtually revered Sir John F. W. Herschel.<sup>69</sup> As late as 1868, in his opening address at the inauguration of James McCosh as president of Princeton College, Hodge, who had chaired the committee to bring McCosh to Princeton, declared, “Religion and Science are twin daughters of heaven. . . .” Hodge then added a phrase that I have never found elsewhere expressed in his work: “We are deeply convinced that all forms of knowledge without religion become satanic.”<sup>70</sup> Doxological science apparently carried purifying capabilities as well.

Hodge and others derived numerous implications from this antebellum doxological science. One important derivative was the assumption of *design and order* in the natural world. Bozeman explains that “Scientific workers in that age generally assumed that each structure in nature was providentially ‘designed’ with reference to particular function and end.”<sup>71</sup> “A single web of

<sup>66</sup> Hodge, *ST*, vol. 1, pp. 9–10.

<sup>67</sup> As we shall see, Samuel Tyler was a frequent contributor to the *BRPR*. In fact in 1847 the *BRPR* (19, p. 125) pronounced it an “intellectual feast” to peruse Tyler’s theoretical writings. For a brief exposition of Tyler’s contribution to American science, see George H. Daniels, *Science in the Age of Jackson* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), pp. 63–85.

<sup>68</sup> Theodore Dwight Bozeman, *Protestants in the Age of Science*. I am indebted to Bozeman for this quote from Basil Wiley’s *The Eighteenth Century Background* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1940), p. 136.

<sup>69</sup> Hodge returns to these English and Scotch authors in his *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1, pp. 217ff. For an overview of the *Bridgewater Treatises* and setting see Charles Gillespie, *Genesis and Geology: The Impact of Scientific Discoveries upon Religion Beliefs in the Decades before Darwin* (Princeton, 1959), pp. 209–216.

<sup>70</sup> Charles Hodge, “Address at the Inauguration of James McCosh” (1866), *APUL*, p. 5.



orderliness," as Perry Miller once called it, was a basic feature of Calvinist convictions. "The Creator of all things has established an order, an antecedence and sequence, in the phenomena of the universe of both matter and mind," wrote Samuel Tyler in *The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* in 1843. Another Presbyterian put it this way: "We ordinarily look upon the works of God in detached portions, but how much greater is our delight, when, amidst all the complexity of the myriads of objects that compose our system, we can discover the uniformity and simplicity of those great principles by which its Maker . . . brings order out of its apparent chaos."<sup>72</sup>

This ordering dimension in doxological science led to another. God's providential care for the natural order was tailored to be congruent with human needs. Though not without mystery, this anthropocentric assumption, insists Bozeman, affirmed that the universe was *comfortably* ordered and natural forces and energies were conducive for human life.<sup>73</sup> In short, purpose, benevolence, and rationality were the deep assumptions of Hodge's approach to scientific agenda.

One last dimension of Hodge's Princeton paradigm needs mentioning, namely, that Hodge understood theology itself as a scientific enterprise.<sup>74</sup> These Princeton theologians argued that theology and science shared a common methodology. Bacon's inductive procedures collecting data and collating facts into generalizations were as appropriate to the theologian as they were to the scientist. The latter called their generalizations "laws" while theologians called theirs "doctrines." This schema assumed the "unitariness" of human knowledge. By implication *both* the facts of nature and the facts of the Bible

<sup>71</sup> Bozeman, *Protestants in the Age of Science*, pp. 82–83. This commitment to the "principle of design" is so pervasive among these Princeton theologians that Archibald Alexander argued in 1845 that it was a foundational principle of his biblical hermeneutics. "Revelation is worth nothing to us without the aid of what we shall call, THE PRINCIPLE OF DESIGN." He meant by this that any particular part of the Bible must be interpreted within the "design" of the whole of the Bible, a principle he insisted, was operative in all human reasoning, linguistic study, the legal profession, and the natural sciences. See Archibald Alexander, "The Principal of Design in the Interpretation of Scripture," *BRPR* 17 (1845): 409–428. This same preoccupation with "design" in biblical hermeneutics was reiterated in J. Addison Alexander, "The Plan and Purpose of Patriarchal History," *BRPR* 27 (1855): 24–39.

<sup>72</sup> Samuel Tyler, "Psychology" *BRPR* 15 (1843): 227. The second quote is cited in Bozeman, *Protestants in the Age of Science*, p. 84.

<sup>73</sup> I suspect that larger doctrinal commitments of the Augustinian-Calvinist tradition surface in these three characteristics. Doctrines of creation and redemption are equally rooted in God's sovereignty in the Reformed tradition and, I suspect, Hodge's doxological science merely extended those Reformed convictions to encompass teleology, benevolence, and rationality.

<sup>74</sup> For a brief discussion of "theology as science" in antebellum America, see Herbert Hovenkamp, *Science and Religion in America, 1800–1860*, chapter 4.

shared a revelatory status, though biblical facts were clearly "more equal than others" and possessed a privileged position.<sup>75</sup>

Hodge's understanding of the scientific nature of theology must have deepened and expanded while he was in Germany. Walter Conser makes a convincing case that F. August Tholuck of the University of Halle schooled the young American in the scientific character of theology.<sup>76</sup> According to Conser, critical inquiry and systematization were at the center of Tholuck's understanding of the task of theology.<sup>77</sup> Fifty years later, at the end of Hodge's career, this aspect of the Princeton paradigm still remained a prominent—and controversial—method of Hodge's theologizing:

It is a fundamental principle of all sciences, and of theology among the rest, that theory is to be determined by facts and not facts by theory. As natural science was a chaos until the principle of induction was admitted and faithfully carried out, so theology is a jumble of human speculations, not worth a straw when men refuse to apply the same principle

<sup>75</sup> In a lecture at the Seminary in 1812, Alexander stated that "The discovery of truth is the object of every science. To become acquainted with those truths which related to the being, character, and works of God, and the relations subsisting between him and his creatures, is the object of Theological Science." See A. Alexander, "The Nature and Evidence of Truth," in *The Princeton Theology*, p. 62. For a different evaluation of Alexander's thought, see Lefferts Loetscher, *Facing the Enlightenment and Pietism: Archibald Alexander and the Founding of Princeton Theological Seminary*, especially chapter 14, "A Protestant Scholasticism."

<sup>76</sup> Since Hodge attended seminars and sermons of Friedrich Schleiermacher while in Berlin in 1828 it is highly likely that Hodge would also have known Schleiermacher's *Brief Outline of the Study of Theology* (1811) where Schleiermacher not only divided theology into philosophical, historical and practical theology, but also claimed that theology was a science with methodology, procedures, and goals of its own. Hodge, however, eschewed Schleiermacher's way of doing theology. I suggest that Hodge's understanding of science was grounded in Scottism realism, a philosophical tradition utterly foreign to Schleiermacher.

<sup>77</sup> Hodge translated portions of Tholuck's *The History of Theology in the Eighteenth Century* and published them in 1828 in the *Biblical Repertory*. These translated lectures were later reprinted in Charles Hodge, *Theological Essays* (New York: Wiley and Putnam, 1846). Their opening paragraphs must have sounded very congenial when the young Hodge first heard them at the University of Halle:

Human knowledge [Tholuck wrote] is derived from reflection and experience. The latter supplies the material which the former arranges and systematizes. The first step, therefore, in the acquisition of knowledge, is the collection of facts. . . . In the external history truths of God are communicated as facts, in the history of the heart the truth has the testimony of experience and thus we are brought to believe in revelation. (Pp. 524, 559)

For many of these insights regarding Hodge I am indebted to Walter Conser's comments about the nineteenth-century German *Vermittlungstheologen*, including August Tholuck. I suspect that Tholuck's influence on Hodge is much greater and more pivotal than historians have discerned. Further, Conser's observations suggest the need for a fresh examination of Hodge's theological prospectus, especially when one seeks to measure the comparative influence of Turretin. See Conser, *God and the Natural World* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1993), pp. 48–54; 65–74.

to the study of the Word of God. . . . The true method of theology is, therefore, the inductive which assumes that the Bible contains all the facts or truth which form the contents of theology, just as the facts of nature are the contents of natural sciences.<sup>78</sup>

Beneath this notion of “theology of science” were deeper commitments, such as the unity of the Bible, confidence in human reasoning, the placing of reliable knowledge preeminent in the *ordo salutis*, and the universality and perspicuity of common sense. These antebellum Princeton theologians never gave much credence to Immanuel Kant’s unbridgeable bifurcation of human knowledge into noumenal and phenomenal categories. Consequently, their theology and its scientific methodology must have appeared eminently congenial to their world view: it was in accord with their common sense assumptions; it pointed to the sovereign, caring Creator authorized in Scripture; and it exhibited a robust confidence that science could be reasonably conscripted to forge an apologia for the skeptical world.

#### HODGE AND ANTEBELLUM SCIENCE

Between 1830 and 1860, nearly twenty percent of the articles in the *Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* pertained to science. Hodge’s role as editor undoubtedly meant that he—along with the “association of gentlemen” who served as an editorial board—employed this sophisticated journal to promote, defend, and expand the Princeton paradigm. Samuel Tyler, a Maryland law professor and author of some thirteen articles, often led the way through issues of antebellum scientific methodology. “No matter what be the subject upon which the mind is employed, whether in the psychological, moral or material world—whether in metaphysics, ethics, politics, mathematics, or in different branches of natural philosophy [science], the reasoning is always the same.”<sup>79</sup> Albert Dod (1805–1845), a professor of mathematics at Princeton College and very close friend of Hodge, frequently contributed to Hodge’s journal, especially in the arena of America’s fledgling discipline of psychology. One aspect of antebellum psychology—phrenology—drew repeated and harsh criticism from Dod. He called it a “medley of dogmatism and quackery . . . born some centuries too late.” Dod hoped that other American scientists examining human behavior would not follow the phrenologists’ lead. “The

<sup>78</sup> Hodge, *ST*, vol. 1, pp. 14–15; 17.

<sup>79</sup> Samuel Tyler, “The Baconian Philosophy,” *BRPR* 12 (1840): 353.



open shaft of an unsuccessful miner will ought at least to save others from a useless expenditure in the same spot. . . ."<sup>80</sup>

Hodge's journal was also instrumental in keeping America's reading audiences abreast of international developments in science. Still another of Hodge's friends, Joseph Henry (1797–1878), a professor at Princeton College and later head of the Smithsonian Institute, reported regularly on the research papers delivered from the British Association for the Advancement of Science.<sup>81</sup>

Hodge was transferred from biblical studies to the chair of his teacher, Archibald Alexander in 1840, with the new title Professor of Exegetical and Didactic Theology.<sup>82</sup> In the two decades after the American Sunday School Union published his very popular *Way of Life* (1841) Hodge himself contributed more than forty articles to *The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* on an expansive range of topics in theology, science, and politics.

With regard to his scientific discourse, no issue preoccupied Hodge's (and his journal's) attention as that of the origins of the human race.<sup>83</sup> That issue was particularly acute for the Princeton paradigm because: 1) it encapsulated the conventions in Hodge's biblical hermeneutics (already under duress from radical biblical critics); 2) it engaged varied opinions of scientists holding competitive views about humankind's basic nature and human progress; and 3) it inevitably raised divisive issues about race and American slavery. Hodge was also aware that others in scientific communities in America and England were trying to establish boundaries for the burgeoning scientific research in cosmology, anthropology, chemistry, and physics. Charles Lyell (1807–1875), the famed Cambridge geologist, vowed that he was determined to "free science from Moses." Hodge and his colleagues naively assumed theologians and scientists could negotiate their respective boundaries (and turfs) if all methodological and epistemological assumptions were made explicit. Typical of the Princeton theologians' response to this literature was an article by Mat-

<sup>80</sup> Albert B. Dod, "Phrenology," *BRPR* 10 (1838): 280. For a brief biography of Albert D. Dod, see the *Index Volume*, *BRPR* (1871): 151–155. Hodge once commented that Dod "kept the minds of his friends on the stretch." For a survey of phrenology in American science, see Hovenkamp, *Science and Religion*, chapter 10.

<sup>81</sup> Joseph Henry, "The British Association for the Advancement of Science," *BRPR* 13 (1841): 132–149. He surveyed the literature in the "physical" sciences (especially physics and chemistry), geology, zoology, botany, medicine, statistics, and mechanical science. For examples of the "Short Notices" and the "Quarterly Scientific Intelligence" see *BRPR* 22 (1851): 556, 696; and *BRPR* 28 (1856): 350–356.

<sup>82</sup> Hodge, *LCH*, p. 321.

<sup>83</sup> For a worthy background to this issue in antebellum America, see Herbert Hovenkamp, *Science and Religion in America, 1800–1860*, especially, chapter 10, "Coming From Nowhere."

thew Hope (1812–1859) entitled “The Relation of Scripture and Geology.” After outlining the most recent findings of geology, both in America and abroad, Hope repeatedly reminded the “friends of revelation” that “geology has a peculiar claim” on how theologians address the world’s origins.<sup>84</sup>

The demarcation issue erupted in 1845, when the notorious *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation* was reprinted in New York City. The book, published in Scotland the year before, was so controversial that its original publisher dared not reveal its author’s name.<sup>85</sup> Relying on Laplace’s earlier work, *Vestiges* described in elaborate detail the formation of the universe and a subsequent spontaneous, biological development of humans on the earth. The book was besieged from many quarters including many intemperate remarks from scientists.<sup>86</sup> Albert Dod responded for the Princeton theologians with a long article in the *The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* which contained two basic thrusts: that *Vestige*’s arguments were inherently atheistical and its science was inferior and faulty. He launched his analysis with a warning:

We have in this work the most elaborate attempt, which has been made in recent times, to establish a mechanical theory of the universe. . . . Astronomy, geology, chemistry, natural history, ethnography, physical and metaphysical science, are all laid under contribution for the establishment of his theory. His work gives proof of extensive acquaintance with modern science, and singular ability to connect together facts in real or seeming support of the superstructure he attempts to rear.<sup>87</sup>

<sup>84</sup> Matthew B. Hope, “Relation between Scripture and Geology,” *BRPR* 13 (1841): 368–394. Hope studied medicine at the University of Pennsylvania, served as a missionary to India and a Presbyterian denominational official until joining the faculty at Princeton College in 1845 as professor of Belles Lettres and Political Economy.

<sup>85</sup> Its author was eventually identified as the Scotsman, Robert Chambers. The book was enormously popular, selling a remarkable 24,000 copies. The literature on the *Vestiges* controversy is still growing. See Charles C. Gillespie, *Genesis and Geology: The Impact of Scientific Discoveries upon Religious Beliefs in the Decades before Darwin*; David Linberg and Ronald L. Numbers, eds., *God and Nature: Historical Essays on the Encounter Between Christianity and Science* (Berkeley, 1986); John H. Brooke, *Science and Religion: Some Historical Perspectives* (Cambridge, England, 1991). For other American reactions to *Vestiges* see Hovenkamp, *Science and Religion in America*, pp. 187–210.

<sup>86</sup> For a lively discussion on how the *Vestiges* controversy played in America, see George H. Daniels, *American Science in the Age of Jackson*, chapter 2. For example, Asa Gray, the Harvard botanist of international repute, writing in the *North American Review*, bluntly accused *Vestiges* of being “pitiable” science and then added: A “man deeply versed in a single department [of science] is much better qualified to judge the whole scheme [of creation] than one who, like our author [of *Vestiges*], professes to possess only superficial acquaintance with any branch of science whatsoever.” In like manner a writer in the *New Englander* added “He [the author of *Vestiges*] may indeed be a bitter foe of our holy religion, but we are more ready to accuse him of attempting to seduce science from its legitimate sphere” (quoted in Daniels, *American Science*, pp. 57–58). Daniels’ discussion suggests that the Princeton theologians were not unique in their scorning of *Vestiges* on theological and scientific grounds.

<sup>87</sup> Albert B. Dod, “Vestiges of Creation,” *BRPR* 17 (1845): 505–506.



In the nearly sixty pages that followed, Dod scrutinized point by point the “nebular hypothesis” of evolution by Laplace, which he summarized, not unfairly, as “the progress of organic life is, that the simplest and most primitive type, under a law to which that of like production is subordinate, gave birth to the type next above it, and so on to the very highest.”<sup>88</sup> Dod insisted that Laplace’s was a “mechanistic theory” with a long (and disreputable) history, traceable at least to the Greeks. In the end as in the beginning, Dod claimed that *Vestiges* was overtly atheistical.<sup>89</sup> “We cannot see why we should be called upon to adore and praise a Being who has manifested no moral ends in our creation; . . . Of what avail is it to give us the idea of a Creator, if He who created does not govern us. . . . To love him, as Spinoza says, is to deny His nature. To pray to Him would be as idle as a dog baying at the moon.”<sup>90</sup> Dod was keenly aware that Laplace and countless others (he included Charles Darwin in the list!) extended this developmental theory to include the human species. As we shall see, Hodge’s later comments on *Vestiges* in his *Systematic Theology* (1872) not only summarized Dod’s 1846 article but many of Hodge’s arguments in *What is Darwinism?* (1874) were already anticipated in his friend Dod’s article.

Two articles by Matthew Hope appeared in the 1850s, where the issues of human origins, geology, and anthropology were once again enjoined. Of particular import was an article in which Hope assessed the research of Samuel Morton, especially *Crania Americana* (1839). A Philadelphia physician and professor of anatomy, Morton had (reputedly) amassed the largest collection of human skulls and concluded that human origins were multiple (polygenic) rather than unigenic (i.e., from a singular origin). Hope sought to countermand Morton’s polygenesis and also raised the “boundary issues” when Hope expressed a gnawing anxiety about the growing secularization of American science.<sup>91</sup>

Hope turned his ire on another conclusion advanced by Morton, that of

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., p. 525.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., p. 531. Dod added:

The author [of *Vestiges*] cannot be branded as an atheist. . . . He sometimes breaks forth into apparently hearty expressions of reverence toward the Creator. [But] we can discern no ground for this reverence. We cannot see why we should be called upon to adore and praise a Being who has manifested no moral ends in our creation; who has made us for gratification only, and left us so insecure of that, that in the chance *melée* we fail as often as we succeed; . . . [Yet], that the system he teaches, however, is an atheistic, there can be no doubt system. As Laplace has said, “we do not need the hypothesis of a Deity.” (P. 532)

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., pp. 505–506; 525, 531, 533.

<sup>91</sup> Matthew B. Hope, “On the Unity of the Race,” *BRPR* 22 (1950): 313–321. Others writing for the *BRPR* sounded the same alarm. See Lyman Atwater’s repartee to Herbert Spenser in “The Training of Students,” *BRPR* 32 (1861): 183–214.

racial inferiority of "Ethiopians" (African Americans). Hope argued that Morton's theory of polygenesis endorsed ideas far beyond mere anatomical differences among the human species. Morton's theories, contended Hope, involved "not only the anatomical and physiological structure and function of the several races or varieties of men; but still more vitally their moral character and condition." In an essay appended to *Crania Americana*, Morton and his collaborator had concluded that the brains of the "Ethiopian" and the American Indian were "inferior in size" to those of Caucasians and that racial differences could not be solely attributable to environmental conditioning. Sounding like the "nature versus nurture" controversy of our own day, Hope acknowledged that Morton did not "push his conclusion to the extent of denying the doctrine of the unity of the human race, . . . but he manifestly favoured the views of those who did." Hope then vented his indignation on Morton's work:

We own that there are few things which more provoke, we can hardly say our disapprobation, but our absolute contempt, than more of the reasonings we have seen upon this question. . . . The facts require that the anatomical structure in all varieties of the Human race is the same, bone for bone, muscle for muscle, nerve for nerve, organ for organ . . . and the attempt to degrade a portion of the race to a level with the brute, and to set aside the Bible, freighted with the happiness and hopes of the race, . . . because, forsooth, the heel, (*os calcis*) of the African, happens to average a line or two more in length than that of the Caucasian, or because there are a few more fibers in the muscles of his lips, accompanied in general by a feebler degree of cerebral development . . . is to move our scorn, to a degree that few human follies are capable of doing.

Fueling this fury were Hope's theological commitments:

The progress of human culture and cultivation make it certain, that the Scriptures are to be the common property of all, from Caucasians to Africans. . . . If they [Africans] do not belong to our race . . . how are they to be saved? As the *savans* have warned theologians not to tread on their ground, while they are settling questions of science; so now we are entitled to warn them to respect ours, in questions of religion.<sup>92</sup>

<sup>92</sup> For these quotes, see Hope, "On the Unity of Race," pp. 314–319. Morton's and other antebellum American scientists' views about race have been superbly treated in William Stanton, *The Leopard's Spots: Scientific Attitudes Toward Race in America, 1815–59* (Chicago, 1960). Stanton quotes *The Charleston Medical Journal's* obituary of Morton in 1851:

For the moment we can only say that we of the South should consider him [Morton] as our benefactor, for aiding most materially in giving to the negro his true position as an inferior race. We believe the time is not far distant, when it will be universally admitted that neither can "the leopard change his spots nor the Ethiopian his skin." (Stanton, *The Leopard's Spots*, p. 144)

Fully recovered from his decade-long infirmities, Hodge himself formally entered the fray about the "unity of mankind," when he published in 1859 a fifty-page article occasioned by the reading of a work by J. L. Cabell of the University of Virginia, entitled *The Testimony of Science to the Unity of Mankind* (1859). It was a major article in Hodge's discourse with science at mid-century. And as we shall see later, this article about science occurred at the same time that Hodge's disputes over American slavery were in full force.<sup>93</sup>

Hodge began his essay by reaffirming the familiar assumptions of common sense and the unitary nature of all human knowledge, but differentiating the turf or boundaries of science and Christian theology. The demarcation here is not grounded in any Kantian bifurcation of noumenal and phenomenal worlds, but merely on a division of scholarly labor among co-equal scholars. "Science seeks to learn . . . by induction and analogy; theology by revelation. Let each pursue its course independently yet harmoniously."<sup>94</sup> Hodge warned his readers that prejudice can prevail as much in science as it does in theology.<sup>95</sup> He then launched a long discussion about Louis Agassiz's *Principles of Zoology*.<sup>96</sup> At stake was how the concept of species was to be determined and defined. "We are simply testing the correctness of definition," Hodge wrote. "We wish to show that permanent peculiarities of size, colour, hair, proportion, and structure are no proof to diversity of species." Hodge buttressed his argument by outlining in dialectical fashion the points and counterpoints of the notable scientists in the English, French, and German-

<sup>93</sup> Charles Hodge, "The Unity of Mankind," *BRPR* 31 (1859): 103. For the interplay of Hodge's science and his views about American slavery, see the section entitled, "Charles Hodge and American Slavery" in chapter 4 of this work.

<sup>94</sup> Hodge, "Unity of Mankind," p. 104.

<sup>95</sup> Hodge wrote:

Is it wise or philosophical to adopt a theory, on the mere balance of probabilities, which presupposes the Bible to be false . . . or treat man as though he were a brute. . . . There is in every community a large class of men eager after an excuse for unbelief? Men of science should not become panders to this depraved appetite. . . . The church is willing to meet men of science on equal terms. She has founded her convictions on evidence which satisfies the reason and constrains the conscience. . . . Let science prove what facts it can; assured that God in nature can never contradict God in the Bible and the hearts of his people. (*Ibid.*, pp. 105-106)

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 113. Louis Agassiz (1807-1873) was a Swiss-born, European educator who emigrated to America in 1846 and began a long research and teaching career at Harvard College in 1849. For a brief summary of Agassiz's work, see A. Hunder Dupree, "Christian and the Scientific Community in the Age of Darwin" in *God and Nature*, D. C. Linberg and R. N. Numbers, eds. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1968), pp. 351-368. According to Dupree, Agassiz believed in a Creator who "did his task by thinking a plan rather than by materially shaping his handiwork" (*ibid.*, p. 357). That is, Agassiz's God was essentially deistical. See also Edward Lurie, *Louis Agassiz: A Life of Science* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960) and B. J. Lowenberg, "The Reaction of American Scientists to Darwinism," *American Historical Review* 38 (1933): 687-701. Agassiz emerged as one of Darwin's most persistent and colorful scientific critics.



speaking worlds. Like reverberating echoes, the assumptions of the Princeton paradigm were laboriously repeated. Hodge was confident that good science was not to be feared by the Christian community. He ended his argument where he began:

There is, therefore, an important distinction to be made between those diversities which arise out of the nature of the animal, and those which depend on circumstances. While the interior life of every species of animal has its own law of development, from which it cannot depart, so that like always produces like, and so that permanency is one of the laws of its nature, yet, within the limits of its original idea, its external organism may be indefinitely modified.<sup>97</sup>

Hodge never conceded such permanence in the design of humans despite the fact that in the same year, 1859, another naturalist would not only question what Hodge took for granted but would provide a competitive explanation of why species do not remain fixed and immutable. As Hodge soon discovered, Charles Darwin's *Origin of the Species* severely challenged the notion of design in nature, that is, that "like always produces like." Without justifying his patriarchal language, Hodge concluded his essay in grand style:

The grand objection after all to any theory of diversity of species or of origin among men, is that all such theories are opposed to the authority of the Bible, and to the facts of our mental, moral and spiritual nature. . . . The Bible says that all men are children of a common Father. Accordingly, wherever we meet a man, no matter of what name or nation, we find he has the same nature with ourselves. He has the same organs, the same sense, the same instincts, the same faculties, the same understanding, will and conscience, the same capacity for religious culture. He may be ignorant and degraded, he may be little above the idiot brother who sits with us at our father's table, but we cannot but recognize him as a fellow-man. . . . Would that men of science could but enlarge their views. Would that they could but lift their eyes above the dissecting table, and believe that there is more in man than the knife can reveal.<sup>98</sup>

Once again, however, within the discussion about "unity of mankind,"

<sup>97</sup> Hodge, "Unity of Mankind," p. 119. Hodge added still another claim.

Every animal has its psychology as well as its physiology. The same species has everywhere the same habits, propensities, and instincts. . . . These instincts remain unchanged from age to age. . . . Psychology is not one thing in France, and another thing in Asia. The wolf is a wolf, and a lion a lion, and a man a man, the world over in everything which relates to the characteristic propensities of their nature. (*Ibid.*, p. 121-122)

Obvious here are the common sense assumptions that humans the world over are the same.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 149.



controversial positions about racial differences arose. The theory of multi-origins of the human family, Hodge claimed, was endorsed by some scientists "for the purpose of furnishing a satisfactory foundation for the perpetuity of African slaveholding. . . ."<sup>99</sup> Hodge focused the last third of this 1859 essay on racial differences in the human family.

More than science was at play here. Hodge's views about race, slavery, and racism were mingled in the "unity of mankind" controversy. By this time (1859) Hodge fully recognized that race and slavery in America were indissolubly and immorally linked. The year 1859 was a particularly volatile if not ominous year in America. Hodge was, as I shall develop later, keenly aware of the nation and churches' "irrepressible conflict" and the tragedies associated with America's "peculiar institution." Appropriately, Hodge located this scientific controversy over the origins and identity of the human species within a distinctly political and ecclesial context.

As therefore the universe in all its parts is constructed on a definite plan, as the laws of nature are uniform, as the constituent elements of the material world are permanent, it would be in strange contradiction with this universal analogy, if in the very highest department of nature, in the organic and living world, everything should be unstable, that species could mingle with species, and confusion take the place of order and uniformity. So far as our limited reading extends, this doctrine of hybridity is maintained only by those who deny the specific unity of mankind.<sup>100</sup>

Apparently, according to Hodge, whatever the reasons for the diversity and differences in the human species, the theory of polygenesis was not a reliable hypothesis. Agassiz had earlier lectured that Caucasians descended from the sons of Noah and that it did not violate Scripture to say that Africans and Malays were created separately.<sup>101</sup> Hodge vigorously differed with Agassiz's polygenetic definition of the human species and a long quote is necessary to probe Hodge's argument and passion.

No definition of [the human] species can be authenticated and established on a scientific basis, which will not [acknowledge that] . . . there is a higher bond of union in the identity of *pneuma* [spirit]. The rational and immortal soul belongs to all, and it is the same in all. . . . The rational soul of the Caucasian, of the Mongolian, and of the African, do not differ the one from the other, more than the soul of one Englishman

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., p. 112,

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., p. 130.

<sup>101</sup> See Dupree, "Christianity and Scientific Community," p. 357

differs from that of another. There may of course be a great difference in the mental endowments of different races of men, as there are among the different members of the same family. But this does not effect the question of identity. The essential faculties are the same in all. All have the powers of understanding, will and conscience. . . . These are the elements of our higher nature. . . . Any man who has ever looked an intelligent, moral, pious African in the face, has had a divine attestation to the unity of mankind, and the universal brotherhood of man. And in this view of subject, how small a business it is for one naturalist to be measuring the facial angle, another the base of the skull, another to subject a hair to the microscope, in order thus to prove that men are of different species. It is of course a strong confirmation of the specific identity of all the varieties of human family, that they are capable of intermixture. . . . There are over four hundred thousand mulattoes in the United States; and they are just as able to perpetuate their race [i.e., species] as either whites or blacks.<sup>102</sup>

Hodge concluded the article with the same pleading with which he began. The Church, conscious of its own fallibility, had "a right to demand of men of science that they be cautious in announcing facts even apparently hostile to the generally received sense of Scripture."<sup>103</sup>

### HODGE AND DARWINISM

With the Civil War raging, Hodge expanded the "Unity of Mankind" essay into a follow-up article in 1862 in *The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review*, "An Examination of Some Reasonings against the Unity of Mankind." Once again the publications of Samuel Morton, the Philadelphia collector of human skulls and author of *Crania Americana*, were reviewed. Tediously, Hodge compared Morton's work with nineteen other "writers on this subject" and concluded that scientists were far from unanimous about humanity's origins and a case for polygenesis was yet unestablished. Near the end of this 1862 essay, however, Hodge mentioned in a long footnote seeing "a remarkable

<sup>102</sup> Hodge, "Unity of Mankind," pp. 132-133. Earlier in 1849, in an essay that discussed American slavery, Hodge argued in a similar vein. See Charles Hodge, "Emancipation," *BRPR* 21 (1849): 592ff. As late as 1862, Hodge reiterated these ideas about race and slavery. "It is quite certain that the new doctrines which hold black people in perpetual slavery to whites, do rest at bottom upon a diversity of origin and species in the human race. . . ." As we shall see later, Hodge's views about slavery and race are certainly not exhausted by these remarks but they provide an indispensable context when Hodge considered the issue of America's "peculiar institution."

<sup>103</sup> Hodge, "Unity of Mankind," p. 106

book" at the "opposite pole of sceptical speculation in natural history" entitled, *On the Origin of the Species* by Charles Darwin.

The object of this work is to prove there is no such thing as permanence in the species of natural history; that all existing forms of animal life have been derived through natural generation; . . . It carries, however, its own refutation in itself, in that author's frank admission of the difficulties of his theory. . . . Darwin finds so little difference between man and animals, that he believes them all to be "descended from most only four or five progenitors," and infers, "from analogy," that they are "descended from some one primordial form. . . ."<sup>104</sup>

This reference to *On the Origins of the Species* (1859) is instructive not only because it is probably Hodge's earliest written response to Darwin but also because it anticipates how Hodge will interpret Darwin's work.

With the meteoric rise of Darwin's popularity, Hodge, then in his seventies, wrote a sharp rebuttle to Darwin's work in the second volume of the *Systematic Theology* (1871–1872) in a subsection entitled, "Theories of [Human] Development."<sup>105</sup> After comparing Darwinism with earlier theories of human development, Hodge reduced Darwin's theory to four principles: the law of heredity; the law of variation; the law of geometric growth in which "plants and animals tend to outrun the means of their support;" and the law of natural selection, that is, that in the "struggle of the fittest to survive," the peculiarities of their traits were transmitted to their offspring. When combined, all four of these theories proposed that "nature is without intelligence or purpose . . . and it is by the operation of these few principles that in the course of countless ages all the diversified forms of vegetables and animals have been produced."<sup>106</sup> With sarcasm, Hodge quoted from a well-known section of the *Origin of Species*: "Thus [wrote Darwin] from the war of nature, from famine and death, the most exalted object which we are capable of conceiving, namely, the production of the higher animals, directly follows."

Hodge systematically spelled out his response. First, Hodge contended Darwin's theory "shocks the common sense" of the tutored and untutored. It was a "theory with its scientific feathers plucked off." Second, Darwinism was "founded on an impossibility," wrote Hodge. "It assumes that matter does

<sup>104</sup> Charles Hodge, "Examination of some Reasonings against the Unity of Mankind," *BRPR* 34 (1862): 461.

<sup>105</sup> Charles Hodge, *ST*, vol 2, p. 5ff.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14. In the most definitive study of theological responses to Darwinism, James R. Moore calls Hodge's analysis of Darwin "a perceptive and even-tempered (albeit logic-chopping) analysis of Darwinian theory and its theological implications." I am indebted to Mark Noll for this reference.



the work of mind" which, claimed Hodge, was an "absurdity in the judgment of all men except materialists. . . ." Then Hodge added, "God, says Lamarck, created matter; God, says Darwin, created the unintelligent living cell; both say that, after that first step, all else follows by natural law, without purpose and without design. No man can believe this. . . ." Third, "the system is thoroughly atheistical" and Hodge quickly added that "it is not said that Darwin is an atheist." Hodge summoned the judgments of Thomas Huxley and Ludwig Bücher, hardly sympathetic religious voices, to confirm his judgment that Darwinism was atheistical because a) "God has no more to do with the universe than if He did not exist," and b) it "obliterates all evidences of the being of God in the World." Hodge mentioned the efforts of Harvard's Asa Gray to rescue Darwinism from such charges thus launching a public debate between Gray and Hodge that would carry over into the mid-1870s. Finally, Hodge argued that Darwinism was "mere hypothesis" and, ultimately, was incapable of proof. "However we may wish it, we can hardly follow Professor Gray in his belief that 'variation has been led along certain beneficial lines,' like a stream 'along definite and useful lines of irrigation.'" Evidently, that is what Hodge meant when he called such naturalistic science "subject to all hallucinations."<sup>107</sup> A colleague wrote with equal alarm. "The great battles of Christianity henceforth are to be fought with the various forms of unbelief generated by scientific inquiry. . . . It is not the scepticism of Celsus, or Porphyry or Voltaire . . . but the *scepticism of science* that the church must prepare to meet—the scepticism of Agassiz, Morton, and Darwin."<sup>108</sup>

The controversy stirred by Darwin would not abate. In October 1873 Hodge travelled to New York to attend a Conference of the Evangelical Alliance and to deliver an address on "The Unity of the Church."<sup>109</sup> While there

<sup>107</sup> All of these quotes are taken from Hodge, *ST*, vol. 2, pp. 15–22. This famous encounter began with Gray's sympathetic article in the *Atlantic Monthly* (October 1860) and carried forward to the *Nation* (15 January 1874) and (28 May 1874).

<sup>108</sup> Joseph Clark, "The Scepticism of Science," *BRPR* 35 (1863): 43–44 (italics his). During the 1860s several articles about Darwinism and science appeared but they did not substantially alter or add to the growing critique that Hodge and his colleagues were mounting. See Joseph E. Illick, "The Reception of Darwinism at the Theological Seminary and College at Princeton, New Jersey," *Presbyterian Historical Society* 38 (1960): 152–165.

<sup>109</sup> The Evangelical Alliance was a forerunner of several ecumenical movements in America, including the Federal Council of Churches. The attendees at this ten-day ecumenical conference read like a "Who's Who" in mainline Protestant American churches. One John Stoughton of London said that the gathering "beats the Ecumenical Council at Rome!" The conference was convened by Philip Schaff and Irenaeus Prime and Hodge was invited to give the opening prayer, which is reprinted here:

Come, Holy Spirit, come! Descend in all Thy plentitude of grace. Come as the Spirit of rev-



he attended a session on "Christianity and its Antagonists" in which Darwinism was discussed by several speakers, including James McCosh of Princeton College. Hodge was asked to respond to his friend McCosh's paper, entitled "Religious Aspects of the Doctrine of Development." In a floor debate with one Dr. J. C. Brown of England, Hodge challenged the speakers to "tell us what development is. . . . The great question which divides theists from atheists—Christians from unbelievers—is this: Is development an intellectual process guided by God, or is it a blind process of unintelligible, unconscious force which knows no end and adopts no means? This is a vital question, sir. . . ." Brown answered Hodge by claiming Darwinian development was best evidenced in the "vegetable kingdom" and then instructed his audience to further study the facts. Hodge replied by saying "My idea of Darwinism is that it teaches that all forms of vegetable and animal life, including man and all organs of the human body, are the result of unintelligent, undesignating forces; and that the human eye was formed by mere unconscious action. Now according to my idea, that is a denial of what the Bible teaches. . . . [Darwinism] excludes God; it excludes intelligence from everything, am I right?" There was no recorded answer to Hodge's repartee.<sup>110</sup> The following year Hodge published a fuller explanation of his understanding of Darwinism, en-

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erence and love. Aid us, O God, in the discharge of the duties on which we are about to enter. We have assembled here from almost all parts of the world. We have come to confess Thee before men; to avow our faith that God is, that He is the Creator, Preserver, and Governor of the World. We are here to acknowledge that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Jacob is our God. We are here to confess Christ as God manifest in the flesh, and as our only and all-sufficient Saviour, who for sinners died upon the cross, to reconcile us to God, and to make expiation for the sins of men; and who, having died for our offenses, has risen again for our justification. We acknowledge Him as now seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high, all power in heaven and on earth having been committed to His hands. Thanks be to God, thanks be to God, that He has put on us, unworthy as we are, the honor to make this confession, and to bear this testimony to God and to His Son. O God, look down from heaven upon us. Shed abroad in our hearts the Holy Spirit, that we may be truly one in Christ Jesus.

O Thou blessed Spirit of the living God, without whom the universe were dead, Thou art the source of all life, of all holiness, of all power. O Thou perfect Spirit, Thou precious gift of God, come, we pray, and dwell in every heart, and touch every lip. We invoke the blessing of Father, Son and Holy Ghost on this Evangelical Alliance. We spread abroad our banner, in the sight of all men, with the confession which Thou has put on our lips—the confession of all Christendom. We confess God the Father to be our Father; Jesus Christ His Son, to be our Saviour; and the Holy Ghost to be our Sanctifier; and His Word to be the infallible rule of faith and practice. Grant, O Lord, that whatever human words are uttered, this confession may be the language of every heart. And to the Father, Son and Holy Ghost be glory, now and evermore. Amen.

See *History, Essays, Orations, and Other Documents of the Sixth General Conference of the Evangelical Alliance Held in New York, October 2–12, 1873* (New York, 1874), p. 11.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 318.

titled *What is Darwinism?*, a document that propelled the elderly Hodge into national and international arenas of scientific controversy.<sup>111</sup>

Hodge's small book on Darwin has attracted considerable though variegated attention. It is often employed as a "theologian's response" in the convoluted discussions about Darwin and Darwinism in America.<sup>112</sup> More recently, Hodge's book has received sustained analyses and, it appears, the greater the distance from the 1870s, the greater the appreciation of Hodge's argument.<sup>113</sup> James Moore, in what is arguably the best treatment of Darwinism and Protestantism, says that Hodge's work is "perceptive and even-tempered (albeit logic-chopping)."<sup>114</sup>

<sup>111</sup> Charles Hodge, *What is Darwinism?* (New York: Scribner, Armstrong, 1874). Hereafter cited as Hodge, *Darwinism*. This famous work of Hodge has been reprinted, along with several other essays in *What is Darwinism*, Mark A. Noll and David N. Livingstone, eds. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994). My references cite the original publication in 1874.

<sup>112</sup> For a summary of how American scholars have addressed Darwinism, see John C. Greene, "Darwinism as a World View," and "From Huxley to Huxley: Transformations in the Darwinian Credo" in his *Science, Ideology and World View Essays in the History of Evolutionary Ideas* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), pp. 128–193; R. J. Wilson, *Darwinism and the American Intellectual*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989); Philip Appleman, ed., *Darwin: Texts, Backgrounds Contemporary Opinion and Critical Essays* (New York, 1970); D. Russell, *Darwin in America: The Intellectual Response, 1865–1912* (San Francisco: Harper, 1976); and Merle Curti, *Human Nature in American Thought*, chapters 6 and 9 (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1980). Earlier treatments are still very insightful and both of the following articles mention Hodge: Herbert W. Schneider, "The Influence of Darwin and Spenser on American Philosophical Theology," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 6 (1945): 3–18; Bert J. Loewenberg, "Darwinism Comes to America, 1859–1900," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 28 (1941): 339–368 and idem., "The Mosaic of Darwinian Thought," *Victorian Studies* III (1959): 3–18.

The English debate about Darwin and theology is carefully summarized in John Durant, "Darwinism and Divinity: A Century of Debate," in *Darwinism and Divinity*, J. Durant, ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).

For hostile appraisals of Charles Hodge's work see: Asa Gray, *Darwinia* (New York, 1876), pp. 250–259; Andrew Dickson White, *A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology* (New York: The Free Press, 1876; abridged edition, 1965), chapter 1; and Frank H. Foster, *The Modern Movement in American Theology* (New York, 1939), pp. 42–44.

<sup>113</sup> See John C. Wells, "Charles Hodge's Critique of Darwinism: The Argument of Design" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1986); Frederick Gregory, "The Impact of Darwinian Evolution on Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth Century," in *God and Nature*, D. G. Lindberg and R. L. Numbers, eds. (Berkeley, CA, 1986), chapter 15. David N. Livingstone, "The Idea of Design: The Vicissitudes of a Key Concept in the Princeton Response to Darwin," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 37 (1984): 329–357; and Deryl F. Johnson, "The Attitude of the Princeton Theologians Toward Darwinism and Evolution" (Ph.D. diss., University of Iowa, 1968). Hodge's position is placed in a wider American theological discussion in Jon H. Roberts, *Darwinism and the Divine: Protestant Intellectuals and Organic Evolution, 1859–1900* (Madison, WI, 1988), chapters 4 and 5. The essays of Mark Noll and David N. Livingstone are particularly helpful in their edition of *What Is Darwinism?*, pp. 11–49. See also W. Brian Aucker, "Hodge and Warfield on Evolution," *Presbyterian: Columbia Seminary Review* 20 (Fall 1994): 131–142.

<sup>114</sup> James R. Moore, *The Post Darwinian Controversies: A Study of the Protestant Struggle to Come to Terms with Darwin in Great Britain and America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979),

As countless American historians have noted, Darwinism created a crisis of intellect in Western thought. At Princeton, Darwinism assailed virtually every aspect of the Princeton paradigm. As Hodge acknowledged, evolutionary hypotheses had been around for a long time and he admitted that evolution per se was not incompatible with theism. What perplexed Hodge in particular was Darwin's spectacular array of evidence—facts—to substantiate his particular theory of evolution. However impressive Darwin's factual data were, Hodge insisted that the Darwinian hypothesis was unacceptable because it obscured, if not denied, counterfactual evidence. Hodge did not supply or detail such counterfactual evidence to negate Darwin's theory but, as was his custom, solicited a wide spectrum of English, French, and German scholars to countermand Darwin. Hodge's own rebuttal was twofold: first, he demanded that Darwinists expand their definition of the human experience by including human conscience, intelligence, and morality; second, he counter-attacked with his own Calvinist argument.

The philosophical lever that Hodge employed to dislodge Darwin's argument of natural selection was a familiar one, namely the argument "from" design.<sup>115</sup> "The conclusion of the whole matter," Hodge wrote, "is, that the denial of design in nature is virtually the denial of God."<sup>116</sup> Hodge contended that of the three basic ingredients of Darwinism (the viability of evolution, the inevitability of natural selection, and the denial of an "externally-imposed" teleology in the structures of nature) Darwin's denial of design was the most serious.<sup>117</sup> It was also the most threatening idea to Hodge's doxological science.

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p. 204. In an insightful essay, David Hollinger has commented on Moore's analysis of Darwinism and Hodge's place in the controversies in "What is Darwinism? It is Calvinism!" in *Reviews in American History* 8 (March 1980): 80–85. For a decidedly contrary view, see R. J. Wilson, ed., *Darwinism and the American Intellectual* (Homewood, IL, 1967), pp. 40–41. "His [Hodge's] career and his world view were rigid and anachronistic beyond preservation" (*ibid.*, p. xx).

<sup>115</sup> The most complete exposition of Hodge's "design argument from design" is John C. Wells, "Charles Hodge's Critique of Darwinism: The Argument to Design" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1986). Wells contends that Hodge did not argue *from* design but *to* design, that is, Hodge believed in design because he had a prior belief in God. Hodge did not believe in God solely because he calculated design in the created order. This work is especially instructive in locating Hodge in a wider spectrum of theologians and Wells finds that Hodge's perspective is within the mainstream of nineteenth-century Christian theology. Second, Wells has traced Darwin's own estimates about "design" in nature and concludes that Hodge's judgement is not unjustified. For a similar analysis, see David Livingston, "The Idea of Design: The Vicissitudes of a Key Concept in the Princeton Response to Darwin," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 37 (1984): 329–357.

<sup>116</sup> Hodge, *Darwinism*, p. 173.

<sup>117</sup> "Neither the first nor the second of these elements," Hodge wrote, "constitutes Darwinism, nor do the two combined." Rather, Hodge repeatedly wrote "the most important and only distinctive element in his theory [was] that natural selection is without design being conducted by unintelligent physical causes" (Hodge, *ibid.*, p. 48).



Despite Hodge's irenic style and his employment of an impressive coalition of scholars from Germany, France, England, and America to bolster his response, Hodge sensed something more threatening than a traditional atheism in Darwin's *Origin of the Species* and *The Descent of Man*. Hodge sensed that a *competitive* explanation to the natural world was in the offing, that is, a world that could be adequately explicated merely by referencing the natural world's own indigenous processes. Henry Adams sensed the same thing in 1907. "Unbroken Evolution under uniform conditions pleased everyone—except curates and bishops; it is the very best substitute for religion; a safe, conservative, practical, thoroughly Common-Law deity."<sup>118</sup> As James Turner remarked, "Darwin had plausibly accounted for the appearance of design in purely naturalistic terms. . . . The gaps in Darwin's theory suggested limited knowledge rather than divine activity."<sup>119</sup> Or, as John C. Greene once observed, "Darwin felt the pull of the incoming tide of positivistic naturalism."<sup>120</sup> In light of Thomas Huxley, Herbert Spenser, and other advocates of Social Darwinism, Hodge's anxiety was not unfounded.<sup>121</sup> Mary Midgley recently made Hodge's point more sharply: evolution became the new creation myth of the modern world. "By narrating our origins it shapes our views of what we are."<sup>122</sup> David Hollinger, a historian of American thought and science, has amplified this point in his essay "Justification by Verification." In the late nineteenth century, Hollinger insisted, "*Wissenschaft* was a religiously significant vocation."<sup>123</sup> Or in the words of Herbert Spenser, "Devotion to science is a tacit worship."<sup>124</sup>

<sup>118</sup> Henry Adams, *The Education of Henry Adams* (New York: Modern Library, 1907, 1954), pp. 225–226.

<sup>119</sup> James Turner, *Without God, Without Creed*, p. 184.

<sup>120</sup> John C. Greene, *Darwin and the Modern World View* (Baton Rouge, LA: University of Louisiana Press, 1961), p. 11. This point is further argued in Greene's "Darwinism as a World View" in *Science, Ideology and World View*, John C. Greene, ed. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1981), pp. 128–157.

<sup>121</sup> See Edward Caudill, "The Bishop Eaters: The Publicity Campaign for Darwin and *On the Origin of the Species*," *The Journal of the History of Ideas* 55 (1994): 441–460. Gertrude Himmelfarb, *Victorian Minds* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1968) has an excellent chapter on "Varieties of Darwinism." For another discussion that mentions the role of Hodge in the Darwinist controversy, see John C. Greene, "Darwinism as a World View" in *Science, Ideology and World View*, pp. 128–157.

<sup>122</sup> Mary Midgley, "The Religion of Evolution" in *Darwinism and Divinity: Essays on Evolution and Religious Belief*, John Durant, ed. (Oxford, 1985), p. 154.

<sup>123</sup> David Hollinger, "Justification by Verification: The Scientific Challenge to the Moral Authority of Christianity in Modern America" in *Religion and Twentieth-Century American Intellectual Life*, Michael J. Lacey, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989). Hollinger has also commented on Protestantism (including Hodge) and Darwinism in his "What is Darwinism? It is Calvinism!" in *Reviews in American History* 8 (March 1980): 80–85.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*



Hodge ended his essay, not just with the famed remark, "What is Darwinism? It is atheism," but with two quotes. The first was from Hodge's old nemesis, David F. Strauss, author of several editions of the *Life of Jesus Critically Examined*.<sup>125</sup> "We demand for our universe," wrote Strauss sarcastically, "the same piety which the devout man of old demanded for his God." Hodge implied that Darwinism was of the same theological genre as Strauss's skepticism and contempt. The second quotation was Apostle Paul's, "I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." The juxtaposing of Strauss and Paul was more than suggestive; the quotations implied a choice, not reconciliation.

I know of no occasion, either in his autobiography or his published letters, where Darwin ever acknowledged or responded to Hodge's critique. Some scientists and theologians applauded Hodge's essay; others, including Hodge's son, friends and students, opted for avenues which accommodated Darwinism. Others shelved Hodge's critique as too rigid and scholastic. Asa Gray, defending Darwin, wrote in *The Nation* that Hodge misunderstood the role and status of probabilities in science and that he misappropriated the use of the Bible in scientific inquiry. "For the writer [i.e., Darwin] was discussing evolution in its relations to theism, not to Biblical theology, and [Darwin] would not be disposed to intermix arguments so different in kind as those from natural science and those from revelation."<sup>126</sup> That was precisely the crux of the

<sup>125</sup> One of Hodge's adversaries in *What is Darwinism?* was the radical, German biblical scholar David F. Strauss. The several references to Strauss's *Old and New Faith* in a book about Darwinism are not merely rhetorical. Writers in the *Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* had long argued that the radical historical criticism of the Bible, typified by Strauss, was part of a wider, cultural desacralization of the Bible. In *What is Darwinism?* Hodge links German "unbelieving" Biblical criticism with the Darwinian theory. It seems that in Hodge's mind, hermeneutics for science differed little from biblical hermeneutics; all knowledge had a unitary congeniality.

<sup>126</sup> As implied by the quotation in the text, Asa Gray, the distinguished Harvard botanist, did reply to Hodge's book in two articles in *The Nation*, 15 January 1874, pp. 44–46 and 28 May 1847, pp. 348–351. These articles are reprinted in Asa Gray, *Darwiniana: Essay and Reviews Pertaining to Darwinism* (New York, 1876), pp. 254–282. The moderate and irenic Gray, after deeming Hodge an "able and veteran writer," replied to Hodge's work:

Science has been compelled to take up the hypothesis of evolution of living things as better explaining all the phenomena. . . . Curiously enough, the atheistic form of evolution hypotheses . . . is the only one which Dr. Hodge cares to examine. . . . Dr. Hodge approaches the subject from the side of systematic theology and considers it in bearing upon the origin and original state of man. . . . It is beside the point for Dr. Hodge to object . . . for the very object of evolutionists, and Mr. Darwin in particular, is to remove these subjects from the category of origination [that is, theology], and bring them under the domain of science by treating them as questions about how things go on, not how they began. . . . If theologians are slow to discern the signs and exigencies of the times, the religious philosophical naturalist must be looked to. . . . [Hodge] draws an unusually hard and fast line between causation in organic and inorganic Nature, seeming to look for no manifestation of design in the latter

difference: the Princeton paradigm upheld that science and revelation were not "different in kind." To the best of my knowledge, Hodge never replied to Gray. Already 77 years old, Hodge, the mediating theologian, was unable to reconcile his thoughts with Darwin's science. He was, apparently, content to let the issue lie. As he had said on many other occasions, "more light was needed."

### POSTSCRIPTS ON HODGE AND SCIENCE

What then are we to make of Hodge's "bred in the bones," well-informed, boundary-defining interaction with American science?<sup>127</sup> Among the many scholars who have commented on Hodge's engagement with science, two American historians have offered particularly thoughtful contexts for interpreting Hodge's discourse with American science. I mention these scholars before turning to my own analysis of Hodge's interaction with science.

James Ward Smith has argued that between Newton and Darwin the religion-science relationship was superficial. Smith contended that the methodology of science, emerging out of eighteenth-century Enlightenment's suspicion and suspension of authority, was at deep odds with theologians' doxological method of submission to revelation. Thus, over the decades, the relationship between science and religion was tenuous and accommodating. Furthermore, claimed Smith, it was the theologians who usually waffled and accommodated modern scientific trends and "the science they [theologians] accepted ate away at the inside of their system and eventually caused trouble."<sup>128</sup>

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except as "God overrules and controls" second causes. . . . Excellent as the present volume [*What is Darwinism?*] is . . . we fear that it will not contribute much to the reconciliation of science and religion. (*Darwiniana*, pp. 255, 257, 261, 277, 279)

For an analysis of Gray-Hodge exchange, see Jon H. Roberts, *Darwinism and the Divine in America: Protestant Intellectuals and Organic Evolution, 1859-1900* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988), pp. 18-20.

<sup>127</sup> Thomas Kuhn's well known work, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* also provides a conceptual framework for the demise of the Princeton paradigm. Although John C. Greene has argued that Thomas Kuhn's model has only limited application in interpreting Darwin's work (especially vis-à-vis the English and German *Naturphilosophie* paradigms), I would argue that Kuhn's model for interpreting cultural dissonance is singularly appropriate for understanding the crisis in the Princeton paradigm, and, I might add, many other issues in antebellum American science. See John C. Greene, "The Kuhnian Paradigm and the Darwinian Revolution in Natural History" in *Science, Ideology and World View*, pp. 30-59.

<sup>128</sup> James Ward Smith, "Religion and Science in American Thought" in *The Shaping of American Religion*, James W. Smith and A. Leland Jamison, eds. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1961, 1969), p. 414.

More recently, James Turner has provided a similar but more severe analysis of American science and religion. Turner, a careful historian of American ideas, censored theologians like Hodge for compromising their own tradition and making "science the archetype of knowledge."

It was after all, theologians and ministers who had welcomed this secular visitor [Darwin et. al.] into the house of God. It was they who had most loudly insisted that knowledge of God's existence and benevolence could be pinned down as securely as the structure of a frog's anatomy—and roughly by the same method. . . . By the mid-nineteenth century they had, really, no effectual model of knowledge except science. . . . Was it such a surprise that when theologians took science as the standard of reality, scientists and others should do the same?<sup>129</sup>

Turner thinks Hodge in particular put religious faith at risk. Ironically, it was theologians like Hodge, claimed Turner, who aided and abetted the nineteenth century's drift toward secularization and unbelief.

Neither Ward nor Turner, in my opinion, quite make the grade, especially when one considers the whole corpus of Hodge's thought.<sup>130</sup> No one would deny that a "paradigm crisis" occurred at mid-century in Hodge's lifelong discourse with science. That crisis, however, was not located in the issues Ward and Turner delineate. From his Philadelphia connections to his essay on Darwinism in the 1870s, Hodge strove to keep scientific inquiry from descending into a materialistic reductionism. Hodge contended that for Christians who believed that God was the creator of the universe, the processes of nature cannot be fully understood without reference to God.<sup>131</sup>

<sup>129</sup> Turner, *Without God*, p. 193.

<sup>130</sup> Turner based his comments on Hodge's article "Can God Be Known?" in *BRPR* 36 (1864): 122–152. I think Turner has misinterpreted that essay. Hodge made a clear distinction between a human's *comprehensive* (plenary) knowledge and *apprehensive* (partial) knowledge of God. Hodge insisted that the former ranged beyond human intellect and learning: "Such knowledge of God can belong to no one but to God himself" (*ibid.*, p. xx). *Apprehensive* knowledge, however, was not less real or reliable merely because it was partial, argued Hodge.

And as this knowledge is real, and not merely regulative, as we are sure that we really are what we are conscious of being [a major tenet of Common Sense epistemology] so, in like manner, our knowledge of God is real. . . . He [God] is what we take him to be, *so far as our views are determined* by the revelation he has made of himself. . . . [and] our knowledge of what is revealed concerning him is partial and inadequate. . . . The Scriptures declare and the whole church believes, that God is a proper object of knowledge; that while we cannot conceive of him in his infinitude . . . yet our partial knowledge is correct knowledge. . . . We are assured that our knowledge within its limits is true knowledge. . . . (Hodge, *ibid.*, pp. 144–145, italics mine)

<sup>131</sup> Acknowledging the contextual differences, there is a significant congruence between the philosophical arguments about science in the works of Hodge and Thomas F. Torrance. See Torrance's essay "Christianity in Scientific Change" in his *Christian Theology and Scientific Culture*



That perspective, I maintain, culminated in his "drawing a line in the sand" toward Darwinism and thereby challenging a major trajectory of modern science. Unlike the accommodating ways of James McCosh, Hodge's own son A. A. Hodge, B. B. Warfield, and Charles A. Briggs, Hodge faced the Darwinian revolution as he had the *Vestiges* controversy—with "open resistance," precisely because Hodge sensed that Christian theology was conceding too much. "If the *odium theologicum* inspired some of Darwin's critics," wrote Gertrude Himmelfarb in *Darwin and the Darwinian Revolution* "the *odium anti-theologicum* possessed not a few of his supporters."<sup>132</sup>

I propose that Hodge's intellectual disengagement with American science in the last third of the nineteenth century should be focused on other reasons: first, Hodge misunderstood the social contexts of late-nineteenth century science; second, his Scottish realism was eroded, if not dismantled; and third, he was unable to appropriate the new and sovereign intellectual commitments to history and historical *mentalités*. To each of these three, we now briefly turn.

To begin with, irreversible changes occurred during Hodge's lifetime in the communities and contexts of American science. Antebellum scientific endeavors were usually pursued as avocations by "gentlemen" scientists, many of whom were clergy. Between 1840 and 1860, not only did scientific inquiry and literature increase at exponential rates, but gentlemanly scientific activity was replaced by the trained specialists and cadres of institution-based professionals dedicated to the interests of science alone.<sup>133</sup> These changes in the sociological context of American science coincided with the new breeding grounds of American scientific endeavors, namely the university. Prep-school like colleges emerged after mid-century into modern, German-inspired universities where research, specialized inquiry, a cult of objectivity, and an expansion of professional guilds promoted and critiqued scientific research.<sup>134</sup>

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(Belfast: Christian Journals Limited, 1980), chapter 1. Conversely, to measure the vast distance between Hodge and contemporary philosophy of science and systematic theology, see Wentzel van Huyssteen, *Theology and the Justification of Faith: Constructing Theories in Systematic Theologies* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1989).

<sup>132</sup> Gertrude Himmelfarb, *Darwin and the Darwinian Revolution* (New York: Doubleday, Inc., 1959), p. 368.

<sup>133</sup> See especially George H. Daniels, "The Process of Professionalization in American Science: The Emergent Period, 1820–1860" in *Science in America Since 1820*, Nathan Reingold, ed. (New York: Science History Publications, 1976), pp. 63–78.

<sup>134</sup> This literature is extensive. One standard treatment is Laurence Veysey *The Emergence of the American University*, 2nd ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984). More recent analysis could well begin with three works by George Marsden, "Evangelicals and the Scientific Culture: An Overview" in *Religion and Twentieth Century American Intellectual Life*, Michael J. Lacey, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); idem., ed., *The Secularization of the Academy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); and idem., *Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).



With science located in an increasingly academic environment, Christian theologians' earlier privileged status came under increased suspicion or, perhaps, benign neglect. In short, Hodge's appraisals of the issues of theology and science in nineteenth-century America must be located within these fluid nineteenth-century contexts of proliferation, specialization, and secularization. To the best of my knowledge, Hodge never sensed or acknowledged the import of these contextual discontinuities and dislocations.

Furthermore, most historians of American ideas who address nineteenth-century Reformed theology and science suggest that Hodge's understanding of doxological science was increasingly "out of synch" with the major trends in late nineteenth-century science. But they leave unattended the more perplexing questions as to why the Princeton paradigm lost favor and how doxological science failed. My own assessment centers on several interrelated factors. The philosophical assumptions of Scottish common sense realism that made the Princeton paradigm convincing in the 1840s was under serious duress in the 1860s. Hodge continuously argued that common sense commitments were shared by both science and religion. Darwinism, however, severely challenged assumptions of the Scottish realists, who had relied on intuitive assertions about the rational structure of the universe, a structure readily evident to all humans "given by the Author of the constitution of our nature."<sup>135</sup> Inherent in that structure was the "fixedness" and objectivity of *facts*, equally accessible to all because all persons everywhere were epistemologically endowed by the Creator to discern such facts. It would take American Reformed theology several more decades into the twentieth century to jettison Scottish common sense realism but Hodge's reaction to Darwinism in 1874 signaled the limitations of those Scottish epistemological foundations for scientific enterprises, as John S. Mill had so strenuously argued in his controversy with William Hamilton. To make matters worse for the Princeton theologians, many American theologians (Reformed thinkers among them) were courting the competitive epistemologies of Immanuel Kant, John S. Mill, and the nascent pragmatism of Charles Peirce and William James.<sup>136</sup> Hodge chaired the nomination committee that secured the appointment of James McCosh as the president of Princeton College in 1868. Hodge assumed McCosh would shore up the shaking foundations beneath Scottish realism but it was too late for American scientists and too little for doxological science.

<sup>135</sup> See Beanblossom and Lehrer, eds., *Inquiry*, p. 83ff.

<sup>136</sup> See especially Bruce Kuklick, *Churchmen and Philosophers: From Jonathan Edwards to John Dewey* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985). Also John P. Diggins, *The Promise of Pragmatism: Modernism and the Crisis of Knowledge and Authority* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), chapter 1.

And to Hodge's chagrin, McCosh ended up adopting "Christian Darwinisticism," to use James Moore's awkward phrase.

A final reflection about Hodge's several decades of discourse with American scientists points to yet another crisis of intellect in the nineteenth century, the "great Western transmutation" toward historical thinking. The trajectories of Western thought were proceeding away from Newtonian world views, where structure, order, and design prevailed and moving toward the "biologizing" of history, where processes, development, and genetics appeared more viable explanations of the natural order. The fixed and permanent were nudged aside in favor of the endlessly transient and perpetually relative. Or as Loren Eiseley once remarked, the critical revolution in Darwin's (and Hodge's) century was the discovery of time.<sup>137</sup>

However, as Morton White and Dorothy Ross have argued (and correctly as far as Hodge was concerned), Americans discovered and reckoned with historicism nearly a century *after* Europeans.<sup>138</sup> Hodge was certainly cognizant of this emerging "world view." He was already well aware of the commanding and irreversible historicizing trends that were revolutionizing modern, critical biblical scholarship.<sup>139</sup> Yet he never really fathomed or reconciled himself to such newer and modern ways of historical thinking. The evolutionary theories of Darwin—the historicizing of biology—were but another facet of this sweeping shift in Western thought. Marx and Freud would later capitalize on it. In Darwin's evolutionary model, an impressive theoretical structure for modern, secularized, process-bound ways of knowing and explanation emerged. In this sense, Darwin's world view was deeply threatening to Hodge not only because it desacralized nature but also implied that humans could be explained suffi-

<sup>137</sup> Loren Eiseley, *Darwin's Century: Evolution and the Men Who Discovered It* (New York: Doubleday, 1961), pp. 331, 334.

Basically . . . man was adjusting himself not just to time in unlimited quantities, but rather to *complete historicity, to the emergence of the endlessly new*. His philosophy was to include, henceforth, cosmic as well as organic novelty. . . . Time was a different thing now. . . . Through the ruins of vanished eras one could trace the silver thread of genetic continuity winding on toward the always looming and unknown future. (*Ibid.*, p. xx)

<sup>138</sup> Morton White, *Social Thought in America: The Revolt Against Formalism*, revised edition (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957), p. 11. Dorothy Ross "Historical Consciousness in Nineteenth-Century America," *American Historical Review* 89 (1984): 909–928. Ross seeks to correct White's earlier interpretation not with regard to the issue of White's timing, but whether White's conclusion about the triumphal, unalloyed claims for historicism in American thought are justified. She thinks not. Historicism and secularization are intimately connected, she maintains, and those distinctively American political experiences (democratic republicanism) and theological energies (often millennialist) restrained America's endorsement of the historicists' ideologies.

<sup>139</sup> For this important aspect of Hodge's work see John W. Stewart, "The Tethered Theology: Biblical Criticism, Common Sense Philosophy and the Princeton Theologians, 1812–1860" (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1990).

ciently on their own terms. The "accommodation theories," such as those of his friend James McCosh at Princeton College, were unsatisfactory, if not unconscionable for Hodge. Thus he wrote in 1874 "the denial of design in nature [that is, order imposed from outside of and previous to the created order] is virtually the denial of God." As in all issues of science it was not acceptable to Hodge to allow that human life could be *adequately* and *sufficiently* explained by any materialistic naturalism, much less by merely referencing one's biological antecedents.

Several times in the midst of Hodge's scientific discourses he made reference to the nature of human language. After arguing that communication between animals is instinctual, arbitrary and unchanging from age to age, human language was significantly different. Human language is the product of "reason, and perpetual change. Language is conventional."<sup>140</sup> Beneath this polemical rebuttal lies yet another unexplored dimension of Charles Hodge's discourse with American culture and I now turn to Hodge's understanding of language and literature.

<sup>140</sup> Hodge, "Unity of Mankind," *BRPR* 31 (1859): 145.





### III

## Charles Hodge on Language and Literature

### HODGE AND LANGUAGE

Charles Hodge and his colleagues cared about human language. Continuously inquisitive about its origin, diversity, and nature, they acknowledged that language was fundamental to all expressions of cultural life.<sup>141</sup> For Hodge, however, the importance of language extended beyond human boundaries and cultural configurations and conventions.<sup>142</sup> Language for Hodge was pivotal in the revelatory events of Scripture and essential to the divine human encounter. Consequently, Hodge's understanding of culture is inseparable from his understanding of language. And once again, Hodge's teachers and Scottish common sense philosophers provided the foundational categories for his thinking about language.<sup>143</sup>

<sup>141</sup> Between 1835 and 1860, numerous articles about language were published in *The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review*. Foremost among these are: James A. Alexander, "A Critical Grammar of Hebrew," *BRPR* 10 (1838): 196–219; James W. Alexander, "Origins and Varieties of the English Language," *BRPR* 11 (1839): 527–553; Archibald Alexander, "The Principle of Design in the Interpretation of Scripture," *BRPR* 17 (1845): 409–428; Matthew Hope, "The Rise, Progress, and Structure of the English Language," *BRPR* 21 (1850): 313–321; Charles Hodge, "The Theology of Intellect and Feelings," 22 (1850): 642–674; Isador Loewenthal, "The Origin of Language," *BRPR* 24 (1852): 405–442; and James Adamson, "Principles of the Philosophy of Language," *BRPR* 28 (1856): 444–461.

<sup>142</sup> Hodge was no amateur in the acquisition and appreciation of human languages. He once repeated by heart the Westminster Catechism to Ashbel Green in Latin; he mastered Greek and Hebrew sufficiently to be invited to teach them at Princeton's Seminary; he regularly reported to Alexander of his studies in Arabic, Syriac, and Persian in Paris and of his work in Hebrew with Gesenius at Halle; and he corresponded in French regularly with his wife Sarah and freely conversed with German mentors and friends at Halle and Berlin. See *LCH*, chapter 6.

<sup>143</sup> Unfortunately, there has been little attention given to the origin and meaning of language among Reformed theologians in the nineteenth century. For a helpful and insightful essay about language and the transcendentalists of Hodge's era see Philip F. Gura, "The Transcendentalists and Language: The Unitarian Exegetical Background" in *Studies in the American Renaissance*,

Samuel Miller's *A Brief Retrospect of the Eighteenth Century* (1803) devoted a chapter to the origin and nature of human language. After extolling the work of Horne Tooke entitled *Diversions of Purley* (1786), Miller proceeded to recommend the "opinions taught by the celebrated Scottish professors. . . ."<sup>144</sup> Miller meant, of course, the work of Thomas Reid and his successor, Dugald Stewart.<sup>145</sup> A full exposition of Reid's theory of language is not necessary here but several key ideas merit comment. Assuming that all persons everywhere employed some expression of language, Reid argued that "language is the express image and picture of human thoughts; from the picture we may draw very certain conclusions in regard to the original." Second, all language made its meaning by functioning as signs. One such category of signs he called "artificial," that is, the adoption of community-based (Reid used the word "compact") significations by which humans agreed on the signs' meaning.<sup>146</sup> As S. A. Grave has noted, common sense philosophers maintained that such a view of human language not only made one person's private consciousness public and accessible to others, it also functioned as the adhesive for other common sense assumptions about human rationality, community, and commonality.<sup>147</sup> Naive as it may appear to post-modern minds, they were as confident about the reliability of language as they were about the accessibility to the raw reality of the external world. They also required that human language shy away from symbolic or imaginative expression and tended toward fixed or mechanical language, like mathematical equations. Last, there was the critical issue of language and human testimony. According to another historian of philosophy, Reid was one of the very few important philosophers in

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Joel Myerson, ed. (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1979), pp. 1–17. Gura suggests that the formulation of the transcendentalists' philological premises can be located in their methods of biblical exegesis.

<sup>144</sup> Samuel Miller, *A Brief Retrospect of the Eighteenth Century*, vol. 2 (New York, 1803), pp. 122–129. For a similar but more modern assessment of Tooke's influence in linguistics, see Hans Aarsleff, *The Study of Language in England 1780–1860*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983). Aarsleff writes that Tooke "sought to create a philosophy of knowledge and mind that was based on what was aptly called 'etymological metaphysics'" (p. 8).

<sup>145</sup> See especially Thomas Reid, *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man* (Edinburgh, 1785) and Dugald Stewart, *The Elements of The Philosophy of the Human Mind*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh, 1792 and 1814).

<sup>146</sup> Reid was aware of the "ambiguity" present in human language and he thought such ambiguity of "signs" was the source of much mischief in philosophical discourse.

<sup>147</sup> S. A. Grave, *The Scottish Philosophy of Common Sense* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960), pp. 151–189. Reid's own understanding of language may be traced in chapters 4 and 6 of *An Inquiry of the Human Mind on the Principle of Common Sense* (1764) and Essay Five in *Essays on Intellectual Powers* (1785). A modern, abridged edition of Reid's works may be found in Thomas Reid, *Inquiry and Essays*, Ronald Beanblossom and Keith Lehrer, eds. (Indianapolis: Hackett Publications, 1983).

the European tradition to have recognized the epistemological significance of humans' reliance upon the words of others. Societies depend, wrote Reid, on the "social operations of the mind" when giving and receiving commands, offering family promises, negotiating business contracts, rendering legal testimonies, and consulting historical records.<sup>148</sup>

Without the reliability of the language implicit in all human testimony no human society would be possible. This emphasis on reliability of testimony was foundational to the Old Schoolers' biblical hermeneutic.<sup>149</sup>

Every one of these common sense propositions about language flowed through the thought of Hodge. His teacher, Archibald Alexander, continuously taught that while "absolute precision is not an attribute of language . . .," nevertheless, he insisted, "language is the most transparent medium of thought. . . ." As early as 1823, the young Hodge told his students that "words excite ideas . . . or sensations," and outlined for his students why the study of language was necessary prior to the study of the words of the Bible. After making the Reid-like distinction between "natural" language and "artificial" language, Hodge summarized his views:

It will be remembered, [Hodge said], that in ordinary circumstances it is the object of every one using a language to be understood. . . . The object cannot be attained unless they [the writer and the reader] are agreed as to the use of terms. The only way in which the writer can be understood is to use words in the sense commonly attached to them by his readers. As this is perfectly obvious, it follows with equal clearness that if any other person wishes to understand such a writing, he must first ascertain how were the words and expressions understood by the person to whom the writing was addressed. And in ascertaining that he may be sure he has the meaning of the author as he is [sure] what he [i.e., the writer] meant. . . .<sup>150</sup>

Years later, Hodge reaffirmed this same proposition. "Language, when interpreted according to established usage, and made to mean what it was intended according to established usage, and made to mean what it was intended to express, is not only definite in its import, but it never expresses what is false

<sup>148</sup> See C. A. J. Coady, "Reid on Testimony" in *The Philosophy of Thomas Reid*, Melvin Dalgarno and Eric Matthews, eds. (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1989), pp. 225–242. Reid discusses the "social operations" of language and testimony in both *Essays on Intellectual Powers*, chapter 1, p. 8 and *Essays on the Active Powers*, chapter 5, p. 6.

<sup>149</sup> I have addressed this issue elsewhere. See John W. Stewart, "The Tethered Theology: Biblical Criticism, Common Sense Philosophy and the Princeton Theologians, 1812–1860" (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1990), chapter 7.

<sup>150</sup> Charles Hodge, "Biblical Criticism and Hermeneutics," Ms. dated 1823, APTS.



to the intellect." Even "figurative language" was definite in its meaning and "just as intelligible as the most literal." Language, he contended, like the natural world, operated according to "fixed rules."<sup>151</sup> Humans, he concluded in his *Systematic Theology*, thought through the medium of words. "Thoughts are in words," he wrote. He meant, I contend, that it was humanly impossible to have a wordless thought since thoughts are *only* in words.<sup>152</sup>

The depth of commitment to this theory of language emerged dramatically in Hodge's caustic critique of Horace Bushnell's "A Preliminary Dissertation on Language," published in 1849 as a preface to Bushnell's *God in Christ*.<sup>153</sup> The ink had hardly dried when Hodge fired off his response in the April issue of *The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review*.<sup>154</sup> Hodge had warmly endorsed Bushnell's earlier work on *Christian Nurture*, but this essay on language was one of the most severe and aggressive reviews that Hodge ever wrote.<sup>155</sup> After damning Bushnell with faint praise ("Everything from Dr. Bushnell has indeed a certain kind of power . . . and there are passages of exquisite beauty of thought and expression."), Hodge deemed the Bushnell book

a failure. . . . It overturns, but it does not erect. . . . He has not thought himself through. He is only half out of the shell. And therefore his attempt to soar is premature. . . . Dr. Bushnell has undertaken a task for which he is entirely incompetent. . . . Machiavelli was accustomed to say that there are three classes of men; one who see things in their own light; another who see them when they are shown; and a third who can-

<sup>151</sup> Charles Hodge, "The Theology of Intellect and that of Feeling," *BRPR* 22 (October 1850), pp. 651, 654, and 674.

<sup>152</sup> Charles Hodge, *ST*, vol. 1, p. 164.

<sup>153</sup> Horace Bushnell, *God in Christ: Three Discourses Delivered at New Haven, Cambridge and Andover; with a Preliminary Dissertation on Language* (Hartford, CT, 1849). See especially, D. G. Hart, "Poems, Propositions and Dogma: The Controversy over Religious Language and the Demise of Theology in American Learning," *Church History* 57 (1988): 310-321. For an exposition of Bushnell's theology of language see James O. Duke, *Horace Bushnell: On the Vitality of Biblical Language* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1984); Philip F. Gura, *The Wisdom of Words: Language, Theology and Literature in the New England Renaissance* (Middletown, CT: University Press, 1981); Donald A. Crosby, *Horace Bushnell's Theology of Language in the Context of Other Nineteenth-Century Philosophies of Language* (The Hague: Mouton, 1975). For a summary of view of language among other liberal Protestant theologians, see Philip F. Gura, "The Transcendentalists and Language: The Unitarian Exegetical Background" in *Studies in the American Renaissance*, Joel Meyerson, ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1979): 1-16.

<sup>154</sup> Charles Hodge, "Bushnell's Discourses," *BRPR* 21 (1849): 259-298.

<sup>155</sup> Hodge frequently commented on Bushnell's work. See Charles Hodge, "Discourses on Christian Nature," *BRPR* 19 (1847): 502-539 and idem., "Short Notices," *BRPR* 31 (1859): 153-156. In this latter article Hodge reviewed Bushnell's *Nature and Supernatural* (1858) saying that "It gives us pleasure, moreover, to add, that the doctrinal tone of this book is greatly in advance of his former books [*God in Christ* and *Christ in Theology*] which were so widely and justly offensive to the Christian world" (Hodge, *ibid.*, p. 153).



not see them even then. We invite Dr. Bushnell to resume his place with us, in the second place. . . . Those who uncalled aspire to the first, lapse into the third.<sup>156</sup>

The raw nerve that Bushnell's book grated was not just Bushnell's Romantic revisionism derived from Schleiermacher and Bushnell's recasting of traditional doctrines of the Trinity, Incarnation, and the Atonement, but Bushnell's "general theory of language."

Bushnell divided all language into two broad categories, the literal and the figurative. Echoing Kant and Coleridge, Bushnell claimed that literal language was the instrument of science, while the figurative was the appropriate medium for endeavors in literature, art, and religion. According to Bushnell, "The great mystery of godliness," required a language that addressed "a whole universe of rite, symbol, incarnation, historic breathings, and poetic fires, to give it expression—in a word, just what it now has."<sup>157</sup>

According to Hodge, Bushnell marketed a commonplace "general theory of language," and then drove it to an absurdity.

It is true, for example, that there are two great departments of language, the physical and intellectual, or proper and figurative, the language of sensation and the language of thought. It is true that the latter is to a great extent borrowed from the former. It is true that the language of thought is in a measure more symbolic and suggestive, and therefore of necessity more or less inadequate. No words can possibly answer accurately to the multiplied, diversified and variously implicated states of mind to which they are applied. Dr. Bushnell, after parading these principles with great circumstance, presses them out to the most absurd conclusions. Because language is an imperfect vehicle of thought [Bushnell believed], no dependence can be placed upon it. . . .<sup>158</sup>

Hodge found this view of language "shocking." He would not let Bushnell's linguistic ideas rest. Hodge insisted that if Bushnell carried the theory to its logical end, it would emaciate all communication and especially theological discourse.

It undermines all confidence in the ordinary transactions of life. There can, on this plan, be no treaties between nations, no binding contracts between individuals; for the "chemistry" which can make all creeds alike, will soon get what results it pleases out of any form of words that can be found. This doctrine supposes there can be no revelation from God

<sup>156</sup> Hodge, "Bushnell's Discourses," p. 260, 262.

<sup>157</sup> Bushnell, *God in Christ*, p. 71.

<sup>158</sup> Hodge, "Bushnell's Discourses," p. 265.

to men except to the imagination and the feelings, none to reason. It supposes that man, by the constitution of his nature is such a failure, that he cannot certainly communicate or receive thought. The fallacy of all Dr. Bushnell's reasoning on this subject, is so transparent, that we can hardly give him credit for sincerity. Because by words a man cannot express everything that is in his [Bushnell's] mind, the inference is that he can express nothing surely; because each particular word may be figurative and inadequate, it is argued that no number or combination of words, no variety of illustration nor diversity in the mode of setting forth the same truth, can convey it certainly to other minds. He confounds moreover knowing everything that may be known of a given subject, with understanding any definite proposition respecting it.<sup>159</sup>

Equally unnerving to Hodge was Bushnell's attempt to apply this theory of language to biblical hermeneutics. According to Bushnell, biblical writings were symbolic expressions of experiences (thoughts, feelings, religious insights, and inspirations) that expressed God's dealing with humanity. Even the Bible, Bushnell claimed, was to be interpreted as poetry.<sup>160</sup> Bushnell insisted his view of language would

lead to a different method [of interpretation]. The scriptures will be more studied than they have been and in a different manner—not as a magazine of propositions and mere dialect entities but as inspirations and poetic forms of life; requiring, also, divine inbreathings and exaltations in us, that we may ascend into their meanings. Our opinions will be less catechistic and definite, using the word as our definers do but they will be as much broader as they are more divine; as truer, as they are more vital and closer to the plastic, indefinable mysteries of the spiritual life.<sup>161</sup>

Hence, for Bushnell, the power of the biblical text depended on the modern interpreter's understanding the aesthetic power of the Bible, rather than its history. James Duke called this a new departure in biblical hermeneutics in America, for it approached "biblical language as artistic symbols and likened biblical understanding to artistic responsiveness."<sup>162</sup>

<sup>159</sup> Ibid., pp. 266–267.

<sup>160</sup> The Bible, Bushnell wrote, "classes as a work of Art more than a work of science. It addresses the understanding [i.e., intuition], in great part, thought the feeling and sensibility. In these it has its receptivities, by these it is perceived or is perceivable" (quoted in Hodge, "Bushnell's Discourses," p. 276).

<sup>161</sup> Bushnell, *God in Christ*, p. xxx.

<sup>162</sup> Duke, *Horace Bushnell*, p. 33. James Turner's analysis of Bushnell's theory of language is compatible with Duke's but Turner suggests that Bushnell's view of language is part of a larger transformation taking place in the nineteenth century. The traditional unitary nature of language,

"The Bible is not," charged Hodge, "a cunningly devised fable—a work of fiction, addressed only to the imagination. . . . The revelations of God are addressed to the whole soul, to the reason, to the imagination, to the heart, and to the conscience. But unless they are true to reason, they are as powerless as a phantasm."<sup>163</sup> Hodge then fired off a final salvo.

Bushnell's theory of language, in Hodge's opinion, led to a Christology that was docetic. Bushnell "adopts, or at least dallies with, the doctrine of the Docetae." Bushnell's Christ, charged Hodge, was so symbolic, such a poetic expression of the Divine, that "there is no need of a true human body and a reasonable soul" in Jesus.<sup>164</sup> Bushnell had denied that Jesus was a mere theophany (a divine appearance), but Hodge insisted his views tended in that direction. "Instead of Emmanuel, God manifest in the flesh, he [Bushnell] gives us a Christ which is a mere expression thrown on the dark canvass of history . . . Instead of true propitiation, [Bushnell] bids us behold a work of art!"<sup>165</sup>

To anchor his point, Hodge turned a revealing metaphor himself. Bushnell's view of language, charged Hodge, resembled the "fine rolling frenzy" of a kaleidoscope. Such a whirling of patterns "may be well enough for him to amuse himself with that pretty toy; but it is a great mistake to publish what he sees as discoveries, as though a kaleidoscope were a telescope."<sup>166</sup> Hodge's point was clear: Romantics saw mere images; common sense Princetonians saw what was real.

Pushed to an extreme, in Hodge's unitary understanding of the functioning of language, the medium was as certain as the event. Bushnell found such a view crabbed, unproductive, and antiquated. Hodge, as D. G. Hart has rightly argued, wanted language to address the whole of human intellect and experience: reason, imagination, and the heart. Revelation was useless, according to Hodge, unless it was also true to the intellect.<sup>167</sup> Whatever their per-

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with little or no distinction between the language of science, philosophy and ordinary discourse, was breaking down under the specialization of knowledge. Such specialization drove a wedge between the language of science and religion, suggests Turner. See Turner, *Without God, Without Creed*, pp. 159–163. For a different but synchronous point see Claude Welsch, *Protestant Thought in the Nineteenth Century*, Vol. 1, pp. 59–60.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 291.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 291.

<sup>165</sup> Hodge, "Bushnell's Discourses," p. 296.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, 269.

<sup>167</sup> D. G. Hart, "Poems, Propositions, and Dogma," p. 315. Hart has carefully detailed how Hodge's protracted 250-page quarrel with Edwards A. Park of Andover addressed these same language controversies. Hart writes:

Hodge conceded [to Park] that theologians often employed figures [figurative language] to explain certain doctrines but the use of them did not make the concept any less precise or



spective, it should not be missed that Hodge and Bushnell were addressing seminal issues in modern theology.

Clifford Geertz has argued that symbolizing activity (of which language is prominent and indispensable) is paradigmatic for "making meaning" in human culture. That is, the way a people employ language to picture or describe "the way of things [are] in sheer actuality," reveals "their most comprehensive ideas of order."<sup>168</sup> Throughout his career, Hodge opted for a language structure rooted in Scottish realism. That linguistic commitment enabled Hodge to construct a coherent description of the actual cultural realities of the everyday, common sense world: reliable human testimonies in law, business, and politics; a confidence in the historicity of past events and precedents, including creedal traditions; a vehicle for human community and communication; and an accessible language for reasonable scientific and religious discourse. Bushnell was shaping a language for the possible and the imagined, that is, the extension of the self. By linking subject and object, Bushnell challenged Hodge's common sense realism at its deepest epistemic foundations. It was the American Reformed version of the controversy about the Jesus of history versus the Christ of faith. For Hodge, Bushnell was not fundamentally different from Strauss and other "mythophiles."<sup>169</sup>

Hodge's common sense view of language, coupled with a "metaphysics of actuality," was decidedly different from those Romantic views of Schleiermacher and Bushnell, Strauss and Herder. Such views about language thus positioned Hodge at greater and greater odds with the drift of modernist Protestantism in the nineteenth century. Yet Hodge's understanding of language—and his facile employment of it—bolstered his confidence and clarity when theologizing about America's antebellum cultural enterprises, including the

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intelligible. Figurative language, whether in the creeds or Scripture, was addressed to the intellect as well as the feelings and, consequently, was just as intelligible and descriptive as the most literal. . . . Hodge claimed that a figurative statement [e.g., the face of God] when interpreted literally was certain to express what was false to the intellect. But in such a case it was also false to the feelings. . . . [Hodge accused Park] of failing to consider a statement or term from the perspective of its established usage or intended [i.e., authorial] meaning. Once put in its proper context, Hodge . . . contended, language could convey adequately any subtle distinction, abstract principle, or simple idea. (Ibid., p. 317)

For a different assessment of Hodge's dispute with E. A. Park, see Bruce Kuklick, *Churchmen and Philosophers* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985), pp. 203–209.

<sup>168</sup> Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1993), p. 89. Wolfhart Pannenberg has made much the same claim in *Anthropology in Theological Perspective*, M. J. O. O'Connell, trans. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1985), chapter 7.

<sup>169</sup> I use this term in the sense of Hans Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), pp. 264–281.



literary accomplishments of the "American Renaissance." I now turn to Hodge's encounter and estimates of American literature of his day.

### HODGE AND LITERATURE

Terence Martin maintained that literary criticism of the novel in the early nineteenth century was, with varying degrees of intensity, "adverse, dyslogistic, and generally hostile." One primary reason for such suspicion was the deep distrust of human imagination by those steeped in Scottish common sense realism.<sup>170</sup> That generalization is too sweeping to apply to these early Princeton theologians. They were neither hostile nor ill-informed. Samuel Miller, as Anita Schorsch has amply attested, was an urbane raconteur while pastoring in New York City and his thoughts "On Novel Reading" in the *Brief Retrospect* (1803) were reprinted in the *Panopolist*. Miller regularly frequented the Friendly Club where literary matters were vigorously discussed and he helped launch a literary review magazine, the *American Monthly Magazine*.<sup>171</sup> The curriculum at Princeton College as early as 1803 required reading in classical and modern literature, including novels, and Hugh Blair's *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (1789) dominated the college's studies of English and literature. Joseph Addison Alexander taught modern literature at the college. While not overtly hostile toward American novels and other literature of imagination, literary criticism was not their forte. That did not prevent Hodge and his colleagues from commenting on the young nation's flowering literature.

The so-called "American Renaissance" in literature flourished in New England during the period from 1830 to 1860. Compared to his other publications in Bible and theology, Charles Hodge himself published little about antebellum literature, and scholars are unsure how much or how little *belle lettre* literature Hodge read.<sup>172</sup> When he did comment on literary figures of his day, he stayed within the safe boundaries of theological analysis. American fiction writers, essayists, and poets who flourished during that "American Renaissance" era prior to the Civil War seemed to have elicited little comment. This is not to say, however, that Hodge was disinterested in the literary criticism of his day. As early as 1830 Hodge defended the need for a national literature, though his Whiggish preferences endorsed a literature that was

<sup>170</sup> Terence Martin, *The Instructed Vision: Scottish Common Sense Philosophy and the Origins of American Fiction* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1961), chapter 2.

<sup>171</sup> Anita Schorsch, "Samuel Miller, Renaissance Man: His Legacy of 'True Taste,'" *American Presbyterians: Journal of Presbyterian History* 66 (1988): 71-87.

<sup>172</sup> See LCH, p. 377.

"polite" and "edifying."<sup>173</sup> As late as 1852 *The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* carried sections entitled, "Literary Intelligence" and "National Literature," in which the journal surveyed English, French, German, and American literary efforts. Hodge, however, depended on his friends and colleagues to serve the journal's need for literary critics. A few examples of this Princeton criticism published in Hodge's *The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* will have to suffice.

Archibald Alexander reviewed a series of essays by Catherine E. Beecher and, while admiring the "strong good sense, the versatility of talents or the ease and energy of her style," Alexander dismissed her theological insights. "She entertained opinions in theology, which if not new, are in our day peculiar." He then added a demeaning, patriarchal comment. Women, he opined, "however gifted and learned, [should be discouraged] from mixing themselves in theological and ecclesiastical controversies. . . ."<sup>174</sup> Kathryn Sklar is altogether right when she insists that for a woman like Catherine Beecher to assume the role of an authority in such a male-dominated genre as theology was to invite attack and dismissal.<sup>175</sup>

Alexander's talented son, James W. Alexander, wrote in 1843 that "there is nothing incompatible with true religion, in the attainment of secular wisdom or in the delights of taste. The union of Science, Letters and Art, with the revealed truth of God and the sentiments of grace, has been suggested and applauded a thousand times. . . ."<sup>176</sup> After reviewing American newspapers, popular journals (magazines), and works of fiction and recommending the reading of history as an antidote to those tastes that were merely "for momentary gratification," Alexander admonished his readers to produce a more palatable literature. "Education and authorship need only to be sworn into the service of Christ, in order to move the mighty population of America."<sup>177</sup>

Lyman Atwater, Hodge's close friend at Princeton College and co-editor of the journal, offered a full-length review of the works and influence of Samuel T. Coleridge. In a rambling appraisal, Atwater evaluated Coleridge's

<sup>173</sup> Charles Hodge, "Discourse on Education," *BRPR* 2 (1830): 557.

<sup>174</sup> Archibald Alexander, "Letters on the Difficulties of Religion by Catherine E. Beecher," *BRPR* 8 (1836): 515-545. For the context of this last quote, see pp. 544ff.

<sup>175</sup> Kathryn Kish Sklar, *Catherine Beecher: A Study in Domesticity* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1976). See also Joan D. Hedrick, *Harriet Beecher Stowe: A Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 276-279.

<sup>176</sup> James W. Alexander, "The Evils of an Unsanctified Literature," *BRPR* 15 (1843): 65.

<sup>177</sup> Terrence Martin offered the observation that the common sense philosopher, Dugald Stewart, once pointed up the deleterious effects of novel reading. Such literature, claimed Stewart, often "calloused" the reader's mind rendering it unappreciative of *actual* human life recorded in historical narrative.

influential *Aids to Reflection*.<sup>178</sup> It “tortures language,” drew unnecessary boundaries between the mental faculties of “reason” and “understanding,” and led to philosophical and theological confusion, especially in the minds of the philosophically uninitiated. “In place of the verities of the gospel,” Atwater claimed that Coleridge delivered “chilling and icy literary essays” and ought to be disqualified as a model for those who “train up a race of preachers.”<sup>179</sup> Another of Hodge’s friends, William A. Dod wrote an extensive review of John Ruskin’s *Lectures on Architecture and Painting* (1853).<sup>180</sup> Dod, also of Princeton College, was unimpressed with Ruskin’s critical acumen. Ruskin’s Romantic concerns for identifying the harmonies of nature with the basis of architectural aesthetics were, wrote Dod, ill-conceived. Like his colleagues, a *noblesse oblige* comment rounded out Dod’s essay. “We believe the question of good art or poor art is a solemn question for the nation [and] may our land be preserved from the fruitage of such criticisms, as that of Ruskin’s lectures. . . .”<sup>181</sup>

Further detailing of the articles on literary criticism in *The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* would be tedious. I have simply tried to establish the fact that these Princeton theologians, however moralistic and unimaginative their critiques were, acknowledged that literature and Reformed theology were legitimate partners in the dialogue about American cultural accomplishments. And Hodge was not unappreciative of that discourse.

<sup>178</sup> Most historians of American literature point to Coleridge’s *Aids to Reflection* as a pivotal work for America’s reading public. Among other things, it introduced Americans to nineteenth-century German philosophy, especially Kant. The first American edition of *Aids* was published in 1829 by James Marsh, then president of the University of Vermont. Hodge and Marsh carried on a modest correspondence, much of which is still extant in the archives at the University of Vermont. See James J. Duffy, *Coleridge’s American Disciples: Selected Correspondence of James Marsh* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1973).

Matthiessen claims that Coleridge was the “most immediate force behind American transcendentalism” (*American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1941], p. 6). Robert Spiller et. al., argues the conventional proposition that Coleridge’s *Aids* (1829) was the initial—and perhaps most enduring—source for examining the philosophy of Immanuel Kant and German Idealism in antebellum America. Other historians of American philosophy concur that a direct encounter with Kant, including the transcendentalists, was slight until mid-century. See Elizabeth Flower and Murray Murphey’s discussion of transcendentalism in *A History of Philosophy in America*, vol. 1 (New York: Putnam Books, 1977), chapter 7.

<sup>179</sup> Lyman Atwater, “Coleridge,” *BRPR* 20 (1848): 143–185.

<sup>180</sup> William A. Dod, “Architecture and Painting,” *BRPR* 28 (1856): 461–493. William A. Dod, the brother of Albert Dod, was not without some credentials to write such a review. Though a Presbyterian and later Episcopalian pastor, he designed and implemented Princeton College’s first academic program in architecture.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 493.



Hodge's reticence in antebellum literary matters was breached in 1839 with a long article in *The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* about American transcendentalism and Ralph Waldo Emerson's famed address to Harvard divinity students in July of 1838.<sup>182</sup> Nearly four decades ago, Perry Miller demonstrated that American transcendentalism emerged out of the complex and fluid religious history of New England. One aspect of that famed movement, numerically limited and parochially intramural as it was, sought "an expression of religious radicalism in revolt against rational conservatism"<sup>183</sup> of American Calvinism. Another dimension centered around an American quest for new forms of expression in the literary patterns after the manner of Carlyle, Cousin, Wordsworth and especially Coleridge. Hodge, fully aware of these newer intellectual energies and generally jaundiced by their New England innovations, published several references to the transcendentalists' efforts. His (and others) article, entitled "Transcendentalism," was a signaled response to the intellectual energies of the "American Renaissance." Clearly and incisively written, erudite and aggressive, the article met with immediate notoriety. It was reprinted in New England by Andrews Norton, in Edinburgh by Patrick Fairbairn, and more recently by Perry Miller. It spawned a theological controversy that lasted two decades. As late as 1856, Hodge would write a follow-up article to defend its ideas.<sup>184</sup>

Two-thirds of the article was written as a critique of modern German phi-

<sup>182</sup> "Transcendentalism," *BRPR* 11 (1839): 37-101. There is some ambiguity about what section of this long article was written by Hodge. Others who contributed to it were Albert A. Dod and James W. Alexander. If Hodge himself did not write the section on Emerson, Hodge as editor would surely have endorsed in its conclusions. Two decades later, in 1856, Hodge himself wrote a sequel to the earlier "Transcendentalism" article. See "The Princeton Review and Cousin's Philosophy," *BRPR* 28 (1856): 331-387. Emerson's "Divinity School Address" drew criticism from a wide spectrum of American opinion, including a response from the famed "Unitarian Pope," Harvard's Andrew Norton, entitled "The Latest Form of Infidelity." Hodge and Norton had a modest correspondence. The irony, of course, is that, when confronted with the American expression of German transcendentalism in Emerson, Hodge and old-line New England Unitarians had more in common than they acknowledged.

The literature about Emerson and the Divinity School Address is vast. Stephen Whicher in *Freedom and Fate: The Inner Life of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (New York: A. S. Barnes, 1961) places this address in the wider spectrum of Emerson's thought. "It had perhaps the deepest roots in his [Emerson's] thought, being an exposition of the spiritual religion for the sake of which he had abandoned the pulpit. . . . He was correspondingly affected by its hostile reception" (p. 73).

<sup>183</sup> Whicher, *Emerson*, pp. 46-49.

<sup>184</sup> Perry Miller, ed., *The Transcendentalists: An Anthology* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966), pp. 231-240. Two decades later, when Hodge had occasion to re-read and defend the article, he considered it for "scholarship and ability one of the best reviews which has ever appeared in an American periodical" (Hodge, "Cousin's Philosophy," *BRPR* 28 [1856]: 336). Incidentally, in this 1856 article Hodge appears to say that he did not write the part of the article about Cousin.



losophy and the transcendentalism movement and provided the context for Hodge's assessment of Emerson.<sup>185</sup> These earlier portions surveyed a wide spectrum of German philosophy and theology—critiquing Kant's distinction between "reason" and "understanding," exonerating Reid and Locke, dismissing Fichte, and disparaging Hegel. The authors were especially hostile to Victor Cousin's attempt to reconstruct Christian theology in light of nineteenth-century German philosophy.

M. Cousin urges an eclecticism . . . which he draws from the spirit and tendencies of the age. . . . He rejects from consideration England and Scotland, on the ground of their lack of philosophy, and pronounces Germany and France to be the only nations worthy of notice. . . . The system of M. Cousin has, in truth, no more claim to the title of Eclectic, than any other that has ever existed. It is quite as Procrustean in its character as others, stretching or lopping off to suit its own dimensions, and differing from them, in this respect, only in its catholic pretensions.<sup>186</sup>

In the end, the Princeton authors accused both German philosophy and Cousin's theological reconstruction as explicitly pantheistic. Quoting several German sources Hodge asserted, "Pantheism is the public secret of Germany.

<sup>185</sup> The specific occasion for this essay on transcendentalism was the publication of two works of the French philosopher-theologian, Victor Cousin, one of which was edited by the American Caleb S. Henry and promoted as a text "for use in our Colleges." In 1856, Henry accused the authors of the *BRPR*'s essay on transcendentalism of "point-blank slander" and, added Henry, "there are many inmates of the state prison less morally guilty than the slanderer." Hodge's biographer related his indignation at the personal calumny. See *LCH*, p. 252. In an uncharacteristic reply, Hodge summarily dismissed Henry as an incompetent. "Of Dr. Henry we have said enough to show that he is . . . entirely incompetent to understand the first principles of philosophy which for thirteen years he professed to teach" (Hodge, "Cousin's Philosophy," pp. 336, 387).

<sup>186</sup> "Transcendentalism," p. 66. References to the supposed superiority of German and French philosophy are frequent in this article. Consider one typical and sarcastic comment: "The Anglo-Saxon *dummheit*, with which Germans charge the English, reigns we fear in us, after an inveterate sort. . . . We have tried the experiment, and proved ourselves unable to see in a fog. Our night-glasses do not reach the transcendental. In a word we are born without the *Anschauungsvermögen* [intuitive faculty]. . . . We once said to a German friend, speaking of Schleiermacher, 'But we do not understand his book.' '*Understand* it!' cried the other in amazement, 'do not you *feel* it?' We deem ourselves competent, nevertheless, to give the plain reader some notices of the progress of Transcendental Philosophy" (ibid., p. 43).

And again, "Every English and American reader must fail to penetrate even the husk of German and mock-German philosophy unless he has accepted the distinction between the *reason* and the *understanding*. We are not aware that the distinction ever obtained any footing in our modern English science, until the time of Coleridge . . ." (ibid., p. 46).

More than one historian has commented on the foundational differences between American and continental philosophy in the nineteenth century. For a recent explanation of the "exceptionalism" in American philosophical thought see Cornel West, *The American Evasion of Philosophy: A Genealogy of Pragmatism* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989).

. . . Deism is good religion for slaves, for children, for Genevese, for watch-makers. Pantheism is the hidden religion of Germany."<sup>187</sup> He then referenced several romantic poets of Germany and England and excused the "poetic dress" and allowances for "poetic imagery." But in response to the "grave language of didactic philosophy" Hodge and his colleagues riveted their theological animosity toward German-inspired pantheism:

In place of the God of Abraham, Isaac and of Jacob, the God to whom his people, in all ages have fled for refuge . . . we are presented with [a God] who is everything, and it might with equal significance be added nothing. . . . We are concerned; we are alarmed. This necessary transfusion of God into the universe destroys our very idea of God. God is made the substratum, the substance of all existence; and we are only bubbles thrown up upon the bosom the mighty ALL, to reflect the rainbow colours, in our brief phenomenonal existence, and then be absorbed again into the ocean from which we came.<sup>188</sup>

In this context, Hodge and his colleagues assessed Emerson's Divinity School Address. "In a rhapsody, obviously in imitation of Thomas Carlyle . . . the principles upon which Mr. Emerson proceeds, so far as he states them, are the same with those of M. Cousin."<sup>189</sup> Emerson's romantic Unitarianism had called for a religious reform, phrased in what one interpreter called the "optative mood," or as Emerson himself once put it, "with proportionate unfolding of the intuition."<sup>190</sup> Emerson in the "Address" claimed that historical Christianity, with its "noxious exaggerations about the *person* of Jesus," corrupted all true religion and the deformities of traditional religions could be corrected only by affirming, as Christ had done, the infinitude of man. "I look for a new Teacher," Emerson concluded who "shall show that the Ought, that Duty is one thing with Science, with Beauty and with Joy."<sup>191</sup>

Hodge and his colleagues inevitably shaped their public response to this American literary icon as theologians rather than as literary critics. "We would call public attention to this Address as the first fruits of transcendentalism in our country," wrote the Princeton editors.

Jesus Christ is made the mere symbol of a man who had full faith in the Soul, who believed in the infinitude of our nature. . . . [According to

<sup>187</sup> "Transcendentalism," p. 95.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 72, 77.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 95.

<sup>190</sup> F. O. Matthiessen, *The American Renaissance*, p. 3ff.

<sup>191</sup> R. W. Emerson, "An Address . . . July 15, 1838" in *The Portable Emerson*, Mark Van Doren, ed. (New York: The Viking Press, 1946), pp. 47-68.

Emerson] any man may now become Christ. . . . There is not a single truth or sentiment in the whole Address that is borrowed from the Scriptures. And why should there be? Mr. Emerson, and all men, are as truly inspired as the penmen of the sacred volume. Indeed he expressly warns the candidates for the ministry, whom he was addressing, to look only into their own soul for the truth. He himself has succeed in discovering many truths. . . . [His] present mode of interpreting [traditional] Christianity, even under the form of Unitarianism, he abhors as utterly repugnant to reason, and insufficient for the wants of our nature; he stigmatizes . . . historical traditional Christianity, that has its origin in past revelations, instead of placing its face in new ones; . . . He treats Christianity as a Mythos. . . . In a word, Mr. Emerson is an infidel and an atheist, who nevertheless, makes use, in esoteric sense of this new philosophy, of terms and phrases consecrated to a religious use. The time may not be far off, when some new Emerson shall preach pantheism under the banner of a self-styled Calvinism. . . . There is no form of Socinianism or rational Deism which is not immeasurably to be preferred to this German insanity. In fine, we cleave with more tenacity than ever to the mode of philosophizing which has for several generations prevailed among our British ancestors; and especially to that Oracle [i.e., Scripture] in which we read . . . that when men change the truth of God into a lie, he will give them over to a reprobate mind.<sup>192</sup>

This early antebellum response to Emerson was informative for Hodge's Reformed theologizing on several counts. First, it revealed the deep suspicion that these Princeton theologians exhibited to all things mystical. It identified the style of a Reformed theological perspective in America that was inimical to what William Hutchison called the "modernist impulse."<sup>193</sup> It also fore-

<sup>192</sup> "Transcendentalism," pp. 97–98 and 101. In a still illuminating essay about American Calvinism, Perry Miller once observed that Emerson, for all his residual mysticism and explicit pantheism, participated in the old Puritan intellectual energies which searched the soul and nature for meaning. "These New Englanders . . . turned aside from the doctrines of sin and predestination, and thereupon sought with renewed fervor for the accents of the Holy Ghost in their own hearts and in woods and mountains. But now [that is, by Emerson's time] the restraining hand of theology was withdrawn and nothing . . . to prevent them from identifying their intuitions with the voice of God, or from fusing God and nature into the one substance of transcendental imagination. Mystics were no longer inhibited by dogma" ("From Edwards to Emerson" in *Errand into the Wilderness* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1956], chapter 8, pp. 202–203).

<sup>193</sup> William Hutchison, *The Modernist Impulse in American Protestantism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976). Hutchison argues that the origins of the modernist movement in American theological thought can be located in that yeasty period of American culture, 1830–1850, when American theologians like Bushnell discovered Kant, Schleiermacher and the Romantic tradition. Furthermore, argues Hutchison, such modernists refused to make a hard line distinction between revelation and culture, church and the world, religion and science: "Culture, in liberal discussions, might still sound 'out there' but it no longer sounded alien" (p. 9ff.).

shadowed how Hodge, in his more mature years, would boldly bypass Kant, reluctantly dismiss Schleiermacher, and roundly scorn all romantic or imminent theological tendencies, as he did with John Nevins and the Mercersburg theology.<sup>194</sup>

<sup>194</sup> Hodge's long friendship with John Nevin frayed when Hodge reviewed Nevin's work on the *Divine Presence. A Vindication of the Reformed or Calvinistic Doctrine of the Holy Eucharist* (1846). "It is," commented Hodge, "a peculiar psychology applied to the illustration and determination of Christian doctrine." See Charles Hodge, "The Doctrine of the Reformed Church on the Lord's Supper," *BRPR* 20 (1848): 227-278. Hodge added a very personal note at the conclusion of his critique, apparently hoping to retain Nevin's friendship. "If he [Nevin] has any faith in [our] friendship and long continued regard, he must believe that we could not find ourselves separated from him by such serious differences, without deep regret, and will therefore give us credit for sincerity of conviction and purpose" (*ibid.*, p. 278). Incidentally, Nevin became more and more caustic with Hodge as their theological views diverged.



## IV

### Hodge and Antebellum Politics: Slavery and the Civil War

#### AN INTRODUCTION TO HODGE'S POLITICAL DISCOURSE

In 1829, a young Charles Hodge, recently returned from his sojourn in German universities, addressed the Home Missionary Society, saying "There is a personality in nations as in men, and as every individual has peculiar responsibilities arising out of his peculiar circumstances and character, so have nations. . . ." <sup>195</sup> The peculiar experiences and characteristics of American politics commanded no little attention from Charles Hodge. In my opinion, few if any nineteenth-century American Reformed theologians exhibited the lucid prose, scrutiny, wit or passion that Hodge directed toward American political life. The breadth and intensity of Hodge's political comments remain largely uninvestigated by American historians. In this section I will examine Hodge's political discourse but will confine my comments to two topics about which he wrote extensively, American slavery and the Civil War. Before turning to these two volatile and tragic realities in American life and culture, a framework is needed to position Hodge and his political commitments in their American, antebellum setting.

Without exonerating the models of H. Richard Niebuhr, Hodge was an exemplary nineteenth-century theoretician of Niebuhr's category, "Christ the Transformer of Culture." Hodge's prior theological commitments in the Augustinian/Reformed tradition probably predisposed him to such "conversionist" views of culture: the assumption of the unitary activity of God in both

<sup>195</sup> Charles Hodge, "Anniversary Address," *The Home Missionary* 2 (July 1829): 17. Twenty-five years later Hodge would continue to argue why American political experience was, as he said, "novel." See Charles Hodge, "Relation of Church and State," *BRPR* 35 (1863): 679-693.

creation (nature) and redemption (human history); an unyielding assertion of humanity's fallenness; a confidence in human rationality to understand clearly an infallibly reliable Scripture; a belief in a divine, just, and wise sovereignty in the affairs and sufferings of human life; and the conviction of the Church's privileged position or sphere of human society. The particularity of American culture and political life, however, required Hodge to translate these abstract Augustinian/Reformed theological commitments into political ideology and social agenda.<sup>196</sup>

More specifically, Hodge blended Reformed theology and American "Whiggery."<sup>197</sup> The Hodge family's commitment in Philadelphia to the Federalist party of Washington, Hamilton, and Madison was later augmented by his Princeton teachers, Stanhope Smith, Samuel Miller, and Archibald Alexander. Throughout Hodge's career, the "grey eminence" of Witherspoon hovered in the background.<sup>198</sup> Hodge wrote regularly and often to his brother in Philadelphia and these letters remain the best source to examine Hodge's political affiliations. One such series of letters in the 1830s recorded his disdain

<sup>196</sup> I use the word ideology here and throughout in a broad sense, that is a set of ideas or *Weltanschauung* which arise from a particular class, group, or subculture. As Karl Mannheim long ago reminded his readers, one never grasps the totality of an individual's intellectual world unless one references that individual's historical and social situation. Mostafa Rejai's definition of ideology as "mobilized belief systems" is not inappropriate for Hodge. See idem., "Ideology" in *Dictionary of Ideas*, vol. 4, Philip P. Wiener, ed. (New York: Charles Scribner, 1973), pp. 552-559.

<sup>197</sup> In the heat of controversy while defending his 1861 article about the "state of the country" Hodge wrote passionately:

Every drop of blood in our veins is of the old federal stock. Our mother, then a child, sat at the knees of General Warren not long before he fell on Bunker Hill. Our father, a physician in the Revolutionary army, suffered in a British dungeon, in the service of his country. We never had a blood relation in the world, so far as we know, who was not a federalist in the old sense of the word. For ourselves, we have never taken any [i.e., public or partisan] interest or part in politics as between one party and another, between bank and anti-bank, tariff and anti-tariff, but only between righteousness and unrighteousness. We voted for Mr. Lincoln, not as a Republican, but as the opposition candidate. We have never read the Chicago Platform, and know nothing about it. We, in common with hundreds of thousands, looked on Mr. Lincoln as representing the great body of good men who were shocked at the inequities and corruptions of the [Buchanan] administration and were determined, if possible, to effect a change. . . . we are not glorying, even in the sense in which Paul gloried. We are simply shaking off the mud with which we have been covered. (Charles Hodge, "The Church and the Country," *BRPR* 33 [1861]; 333)

All estimates of American Federalism will now have to begin with Stanley Elkins and Erick McKittrick, *The Age of Federalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993). Unfortunately, this monumental work gives little sustained attention to religious motivations and energies in the early Republic.

<sup>198</sup> For a helpful introduction to the political thought of Witherspoon, see Roger Fechner, "The Godly and Virtuous Commonwealth of John Witherspoon" in Hamilton Cravens, ed., *Ideas in America's Culture* (Ames, IA: Iowa State University Press, 1982), pp. 7-25.

for Andrew Jackson, though he endorsed Jackson's position in the Nullification Controversy of 1832. In several letters Hodge openly supported Whig-sponsored protective tariffs and the United States Bank while others expressed his disgust over the Mexican-American War. Hodge opposed Jackson's quest to expand the electorate and clearly stated he wanted to restrict the right of suffrage to males, property holders, and the literate. By the 1850s he sympathized with the Free Soilers and voted for Republicans Fremont in 1856 and Lincoln in 1860 and remained in the Republican party until his death.<sup>199</sup>

Such political commitments were not atypical for Presbyterian Whigs.<sup>200</sup> Beneath these practical expressions, however, were philosophical commitments and perspectives of an identifiable and influential antebellum American conservative social and political theory: a classical republicanism rather than populist democratic politics; a political platform that envisioned improved economic groups along the lines of the "American System" while legislating social and moral improvement; a hierarchically-ordered society rather than an egalitarian society; a preference for, if not baptizing of, most things English and suspicion of most everything French; a religious postmillennialist orthodoxy rather than an experimental, premillennialist, revivalist Christianity; endorsement of Whig-financed social action programs that sought to guide, if not control, American culture's tastes and values through management of the press, educational system, and the "Benevolent Empire" of voluntary associa-

<sup>199</sup> Many of these letters are included in *LCH*. Others are in the "Hodge Papers" in the archives of Princeton Seminary and Princeton University. Hodge's vote for Fremont in 1856 was especially interesting. In his authoritative work on the origins of the Republican party, William Gienapp has argued persuasively that many Northern Presbyterians voted for Fremont, while Southern Presbyterians were offended by Fremont's nomination and the Republican party in 1856. Hodge's party, in its Philadelphia 1856 convention, was a coalition of various political strands united by a vigorous antislavery stance. Gienapp makes the observation that religion had less influence on voting in the years prior to the war than did ethnicity or cultural heritage. See *The Origins of the Republican Party* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 431-435.

<sup>200</sup> See especially Fred J. Hood, *Reformed America: The Middle and Southern States, 1783-1837* (University, AL: The University of Alabama Press, 1980). This seminal work analyzes the American Reformed tradition in relation to American politics and national policies. Hood contends, and makes a convincing argument that the Reformed theologians of the middle and southern states "tutored New Englanders in the ways and means of promoting religion in the wake of disestablishment." (p. 3). While Hood appropriately makes little reference to Hodge, Hood's research is foundational to appreciating Hodge's political forbearers.

Several essays in *Reformed Faith and Politics*, Ronald Stone, ed. (Washington, DC: The University Press of America, 1983), especially, Jane Dempsey Douglas, "Church and State: A Brief Introduction for Contemporary Presbyterians" and Louis Weeks, "Faith and Political Action in American Presbyterianism, 1776-1918." Still insightful are older works such as John R. Bodo, *The Protestant Clergy and Public Issues, 1812-1848* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1954).

tions.<sup>201</sup> "To put things very broadly," writes Daniel Walker Howe in the best treatment of American Whiggery, "the Whigs proposed a society that would be economically diverse [as Hamilton had envisioned] but culturally uniform; the Democrats preferred the economic uniformity of a society of small farmers and artisans [as Jefferson had envisioned] but were more tolerant of cultural and moral diversity."<sup>202</sup> One "ethnocultural" historian, Louise Stevenson, summarized the Whigs evangelical, moral and economic initiatives in her *Scholarly Means to Evangelical Ends*:

Whiggery stood for the triumph of the cosmopolitan and national over the provincial and the local, of rational order over irrational spontaneity, of school-based learning over traditional folkways and customs, and of self-control over self expression. . . . [The Whigs were] a party of modernizers who promoted some aspects of the nascent middle-class economy and society while restraining others.<sup>203</sup>

At the conclusion of his authoritative study entitled *Evangelicals and Politics in Antebellum America* Richard Carwardine made an astute observation that helps locate Charles Hodge in fluid and volatile politics of antebellum America:

The Union and the Confederacy that invoked the aid of the same God in their awful struggle had been brought to a point of conflict by a potent mix of social, economic, cultural and political forces. . . . The crisis was, of course, shaped by politicians seeking to advance secular interests and material ends. But . . . it was more than that. American evangelical churches acted as forcing-houses for a theology that had considerable implications for public discourse; they spawned an ecclesiastical sectionalism. Their members instigated political discussion, mobilized voters, pressured vote-seeking politicians, and variously made their marks on

<sup>201</sup> Eric Foner, in his seminal treatment of the ideological origins of the Republican party before the war, shows how the Republicans were comprised of a coalition of northern Whigs, former Democrats, and abolitionists. The ideology of that coalition, Foner contends, is complex and extends to values and commitments beyond their uncontested antislavery positions. Among those commitments were "free labor" rather than "slave-power," social mobility, political democracy, and cultural convictions to undergird the settlement of the West. As Salmon P. Chase put it in a speech in 1860, the Republicans were to be characterized by "freedom not serfdom; freeholds not tenancies; democracy not despotism; education not ignorance . . . progress not stagnation or retrogression." See *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party Before the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970). For the Chase quote, see *ibid.*, p. 56.

<sup>202</sup> Daniel Walker Howe, *The Political Culture of the American Whigs* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), p. 20.

<sup>203</sup> Louise Stevenson, *Scholarly Means to Evangelical Ends: The New Haven Scholars and the Transformation of Higher Learning in America, 1830-1890* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1986), pp. 5-6.



the political cultures of the different parties. Evangelicals thereby made their own distinctive contributions to political life and to the processes that alienated North and South.<sup>204</sup>

I turn then to two nineteenth-century American political issues that eventually consumed American life, slavery, and the Civil War. They also nearly consumed Charles Hodge.

### HODGE AND AMERICAN SLAVERY

The distinguished historian of antebellum America, Eric Foner, in his historiographic essay, "Slavery, Civil War and Reconstruction," points to the renewed consensus among American historians that sees slavery as the most crucial problem of antebellum America and the fundamental cause of the Civil War. Clearly, it is no longer possible to maintain that slavery was some kind of aberration, existing outside American political, legal, moral, economic, and religious development.<sup>205</sup> Charles Hodge's writings about slavery require a similar assessment. "The subject of slavery," he wrote in 1836, "is no longer one on which men are allowed to be of no mind at all. The question is brought up before all our public bodies, civil and religious."

With this comment and its attending essay, Hodge formally entered the American controversy about America's "peculiar institution." He titled it "Slavery" and published it in his *Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review*.<sup>206</sup> It was Hodge's initial though not final assessment of the slavery dilemma in American life and culture.<sup>207</sup> The article was quickly and often reprinted and

<sup>204</sup> Richard J. Carwardine, *Evangelicals and Politics in Antebellum America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), p. 319.

<sup>205</sup> Eric Foner, "Slavery, the Civil War, and Reconstruction" in *The New American History*, Eric Foner, ed. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), pp. 73–92.

<sup>206</sup> Charles Hodge, "Slavery," *BRPR* 8 (1836): 268–305. This quote is found on p. 478. Hodge commented about American slavery in the previous year when he responded to a book published by two English clergymen who toured America and reported for English audiences their reflections which Hodge called ill-informed and condescending. The Englishmen claimed "that religion and slavery are incompatible." In a sarcastic and defensive response, Hodge panned their appraisals of American life and churches, including their thoughts about American slavery. See Charles Hodge, "The Narrative," *BRPR* (1835): 598–626.

<sup>207</sup> The literature about American slavery and abolitionism is so enormous as to be intimidating. To interpret and locate Hodge's views about slavery, I have relied on the following: David B. Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1966, 1975); Eugene Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Vintage Books, 1976); idem., *The World the Slaveholders Made* (New York: Vintage Books, 1971); Stanley Elkins, *Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life* revised edition. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976); Winthrop Jordan, *The White Man's Burden: The Origins of Racism in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974); George Fredrickson, *The*

provoked immediately heated controversy in both the North and the South. Furthermore, it appeared in a decade that might be described as America's "kairos time" in the mid-1830s. The Virginia legislature, after lengthy and stormy debates during the winter of 1831–1832, decided that American slavery was, in fact, a positive value (especially in the nation's economy) rather than a necessary evil. Those memorable debates coincided, according to Larry E. Tise, with a proliferation and resurgence of proslavery arguments among American literati, North and South.<sup>208</sup> Southern leaders like John C. Calhoun argued at home and on the floor of Congress that slavery was a national benefit, essential to southern prosperity and culture, and that infringement on "Southern rights" was tantamount to abrogating the South's constitutional rights.

In reaction, membership in the North's antislavery societies rapidly escalated in the early 1830s and the proliferation of abolitionist literature, fraught with moral urgency and religious fervor, reached its apex in the speeches and writings of the "immediatists" like Garrison and *The Liberator*, first published in January, 1831.<sup>209</sup> During the same period, as we have previously noted in

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*Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1971, 1987); C. Vann Woodward, *American Counterpoint: Slavery and Racism in the North-South Dialogue* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1971); Drew Gilpin Faust, ed., *The Ideology of Slavery: Proslavery Thought in the Antebellum South, 1830–1860* (Baton Rouge, LA: University of Louisiana Press, 1981); Larry E. Tise, *Proslavery: A History of the Defense of Slavery in America, 1701–1840* (Athens, GA: University Georgia Press, 1987); Eric L. McKittrick, *Slavery Defended: The Views of the Old South* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1963); Lewis Perry, *Radical Abolitionism: Anarchy and the Government of God in Antislavery Thought* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1973); Louis Gerteis, *Morality and Utility in American Antislavery Reform* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1987); John R. McKivigan, *The War Against Proslavery Religion: Abolitionism and the Northern Churches* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984); Paul Finkelman, ed., *Religion and Slavery* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1989); Joseph R. Washington, *Race and Religion in Early Nineteenth Century America, 1800–1850: Constitution, Conscience, and Calvinist Compromise*, 2 vols. (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1988); and H. Sheldon Smith, *In His Image But . . . Racism in Southern Religion, 1780–1910* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1972).

<sup>208</sup> Tise's impressive treatment of America's proslavery sentiment is the best we have to date. Tise surveyed the writings of 275 American clergy, 87 of whom were college presidents, and over half of whom owned slaves. He contends that proslavery arguments arrived early in American culture; that its origins were in the North and drifted southward in the 1830s; that proslavery sentiments were more the American norm than abolitionist thought; that proslavery thought took on an ideological character in light of the increased criticism of the abolitionists and the Nullification Controversy. See Larry Tise, *Proslavery: A History of the Defense of Slavery, 1701–1840* (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 1987). Seen in the light of this research, Hodge's earliest views about slavery in the mid-1830s are conventional and largely uncritical.

<sup>209</sup> The abolitionists labored from the early 1830s to the end of the Civil War, writes John McKivigan:

our discussion about Hodge and American science, there were widely argued scientific theories about the supposed inferior intellectual capacities of African Americans. The African Colonization Movement, which had preoccupied the attention of Archibald Alexander and Samuel Miller, suffered from lack of funding and institutional commitments in the 1830s. The South's self-consciousness was heightened by the "Nullification Controversy," called by one prominent historian, the "prelude to the Civil War." That crisis abated in January 1833 when President Jackson deployed federal troops to the port of Charleston to collect federal tariffs. However, John C. Calhoun reminded all Southerners that if the president could enforce the collection of a federally-mandated tariff, the same federal government could come to South Carolina and dismantle the "peculiar institution."<sup>210</sup> In the same decade Southern legislatures and executive authorities systematically outlawed all abolitionist speeches and literature and some offered bounties on abolitionists, dead or alive.

It was also a decade when conflicting *mentalités* coalesced. The "mind of the planting class" of the South, Eugene Genovese has argued, demonstrated its own inner, governing logic by contending that slavery was not so much the result of race but an indispensable component of civilization. Up North, the "cultural imperialism of New England," Lewis Simpson has argued, tended to regard slavery as a merely ethical rather than a racial matter. I am not sure Emerson would agree. He wrote in his *Journal* in 1840, "The Negro is imitative, secondary, in short, reactionary merely in his successes, & there is no origination with him in mental & moral spheres."<sup>211</sup>

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to persuade northern religious institutions to condemn slavery and endorse immediate emancipation. They pioneered many of the tactics that later generations of radicals and reformers would employ when attempting to goad institutions into endorsing movements for social change. Yet despite the efforts of thousands of antislavery men and women both inside and outside the church, all but a few small denominations balked at a commitment to uncompromised abolitionist principles and programs. As a result, civil war and governmental coercion, not moral suasion and church discipline, became the instrument that finally ended slavery in 1865. (*The War Against Proslavery Religion*, p. 13)

For a broader perspective on "immediatism" see David B. Davis's seminal article, "The Emergence of Immediatism in British and American Anti-slavery Thought," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 49 (1962): 209–230. Davis suggests that evangelicalism and romanticism combined to influence the debate over slavery. In this context, Hodge's position is compatible with neither the revivalist-evangelicals nor the romantics of New England.

<sup>210</sup> See William W. Freehling, *Prelude to Civil War: The Nullification Controversy in South Carolina, 1816–1836* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966).

<sup>211</sup> Eugene Genovese, *The World the Slavery Holder Made: Two Essays in Interpretation* (New York: Vintage Books, 1971). Simpson has argued that Southerners perceived New England abolitionism as imperialistic. See Lewis P. Simpson, *Mind and the American Civil War* (Baton Rouge,



George Bancroft published in the mid 1830s the first volume of his popular and nationalistic history of the United States and went out of his way to emphasize the antiquity and universality of slavery, which he argued, was not so "peculiar" in America after all. By the 1830s, as David B. Davis argues, the legitimization of enslavement was completed with the emergence of the ideal of the Christian servant. With the notable exception of the abolitionists, many, if not most, American intellectuals of all political persuasions had learned to live with the paradox and moral contradictions of slavery. Even the most egalitarian democratic ideologies of the day justified slavery as essential to America's economic development.<sup>212</sup> As we shall see, Hodge sympathized in 1836 with such paradoxes and justification. However, as the nation's crisis intensified over the succeeding decades, Hodge, as I shall argue, altered his views about American slavery.<sup>213</sup>

But there was a more immediate cause that pressured Hodge to write explaining his thoughts about slavery in America in 1836. He strategically published them on the eve of the contentious 1836 General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church.<sup>214</sup> The year before (1835), the Presbyterian General Assembly was rife with antislavery sentiments. The Rev. Theodore Weld, an antislavery lobbyist in that 1835 General Assembly, claimed that almost one

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LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1989), chapter 2. I am indebted to Simpson for this quotation from Emerson's *Journal*, *ibid.*, p. 55. The literature about the many strands and facets of American abolitionism is enormous. One earlier survey is Aileen S. Kraditor, *Ends and Means in American Abolitionism: Garrison and His Critics on Strategy and Tactics, 1834-1850* (New York: Random Books, 1969). I have been especially helped by Louis S. Gerteis, *Morality and Utility in American Antislavery Reform* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1987).

<sup>212</sup> For further explanations of American intellectuals and slavery, see David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1966), especially chapter 1, "Slavery and the Meaning of America."

<sup>213</sup> In the October 1835 issue of the *BRPR* Hodge wrote a review of a book published in London and New York which recounted the observations of two English clergymen who travelled in America. Hodge's review was generally sarcastic in light of the Englishmen's criticism of America's hospitality, manners, language, revivals, and churches. When the Reverends Reed and Matheson commented on American slavery, Hodge said he could not resist comment. "As to Dr. Reed's personal knowledge of the state is slavery in this country, it is as near nothing as possible; and Dr. Matheson's absolutely nothing." Defensive in tone and prickly in rebuttal, Hodge concluded by writing "It is not that we love slavery that we write thus, but it is that we love truth, and are convinced that no good end can be accomplished by false and exaggerated statements. If the evils of slavery are to be mitigated, or slavery itself abolished, it will not be by means of misrepresentations or abuse." This statement—however naive—could likewise stand as an index of Hodge's view of slavery in 1835: that he had no love of slavery, that it was evil, but that truthful rational discourse rather than exaggerated, abolitionist claims could more readily bring about slavery's abolishment. (Charles Hodge, "Reed and Matheson: The Narrative," *BRPR* 7 [1835]: 623-625)

<sup>214</sup> For many of the ideas in this paragraph, I am much indebted to the insights of H. Sheldon Smith's *In His Image But*, pp. 77-94.



fourth of the commissioners were avowed immediate abolitionists. Hodge's *Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* had already reprinted the abolitionist resolutions about slavery offered for future sanction on the floor of the 1835 General Assembly. One such resolution charged that to buy, sell or own a slave was a "heinous sin." Another, aimed at the colonization movement, insisted it was "unjust and cruel" to offer Negroes their freedom on the condition they leave America. In four of these resolutions, there was a call for the Church and congregations to censure and "suspend from the Lord's table" members who contributed to enslavement and/or held slaves.<sup>215</sup> Four synods in the denomination had passed resolutions demanding that slaveholding be disciplined by ecclesiastical judicatories and Southern presbyteries passed counter measures, condemning all abolitionist efforts in the denomination.<sup>216</sup> In short, the language, metaphors and epithets that Hodge employed to describe abolitionism in his 1836 article were already common parlance in Presbyterian denominational enclaves.

Well aware of these ominous political and ecclesiastical realities, Hodge wrote his 1836 appraisal of American slavery. Hodge's alarm was not masked as he described the nation's and church's impending polarization.

Instead of lamentations and acknowledgements, we hear from the South the strong language of justification. And in the North, opposition to the proceedings of the anti-slavery societies seems to be rapidly producing a public feeling in favor of slavery itself. The freedom of discussion, the liberty of the press, and the right of assembling for consultation, have in some cases been assailed, and in others trampled under foot by popular violence. What has produced this lamentable change?<sup>217</sup>

The change in national and ecclesial ethos was aggravated, argued Hodge, by the excesses of the "immediate" abolitionists.<sup>218</sup> Hodge noted that English

<sup>215</sup> See Charles Hodge, "The General Assembly of 1835," *BRPR* 7 (1835): 450–452. One of these resolutions was signed by 1051 women from New York City.

<sup>216</sup> George Marsden, *The Evangelical Mind and the New School Presbyterian Experience* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1970), chapter 4. It is important to keep in mind that Marsden has carefully argued that slavery was only one of several precipitating causes in the breakup of the Presbyterian denomination in 1837.

<sup>217</sup> Hodge, "Slavery," p. 474.

<sup>218</sup> Hodge begins his analysis with these judgments:

Argument has not been the characteristic of their publications. Denunciations of slaveholding as man-stealing, robbery, piracy, and worse than murder; consequent vituperation of slaveholders as knowingly guilty of the worst crimes; passionate appeals to the feelings of inhabitants of northern states; gross exaggeration of the moral and physical condition of slaves, have formed the staple of their addresses to the public. . . . The wildest ravings of the *Liberator* have been constantly lauded; agents have been commissioned for . . . eloquent vituperation; . . . the single point of immediate emancipation has been sufficient to unite men of the most discordant character. (*Ibid.*, p. 475)

abolitionism (a significant force in American abolitionism) was no fit model for Americans since the English had the convenience of condemning slavery at a distance. Furthermore, Hodge pressed on, American abolitionist denunciation was ultimately impractical. "The idea of inducing the southern slaveholder to emancipate his slaves by denunciation is about as rational as to expect the sovereigns of Europe to grant free institutions, by calling them tyrants and robbers." Hodge then warmly endorsed the analysis of the Unitarian, William E. Channing, who had served for a brief time as a pastor in Virginia. Hodge at first referenced the Channing book because it applauded the abolitionists "leading principles . . . but unhesitatingly condemned their conduct." But Hodge quickly demurred from Channing when he asked by what "great principles" moral and political questions should be addressed? "What are the moral principles which should control our opinions and conduct with regard to it [slavery]?" Hodge argued that, while such principles were worthy, they were imprecise and left "room for doubt and honest diversity of opinion." Consequently, Hodge continued, "our object, therefore, is not to discuss the subject of slavery upon abstract principles, but to ascertain the scriptural rule of judgement and conduct in relation to it."<sup>219</sup> Hodge carefully couched and positioned the moral question of American slavery: "The great question, therefore, in relation to slavery is, what is right? . . . Before attempting an answer to this question, it is proper to remark that we recognized no authoritative rule of truth and duty but the word of God." Hodge's answer to his own question was focused and clear: 1) there is no biblical basis for declaring all slaveholding as *necessarily and universally sinful*; and 2) there is no justification for excluding all slaveholders from the "church and kingdom of heaven."<sup>220</sup> The implication he drew from these two propositions—the so called negative approval doctrine—was immediately and unyieldingly applied to the American debate.

The grand mistake, as we apprehend, of those who maintain that slaveholding is itself a crime, is, that they do not discriminate between slaveholding *in itself* considered, and its accessories at any particular time or place. . . . We admit that all those laws which forbid the instruction of slaves; which interfere with their marital or parental rights; which subject them to the insults and oppression of the whites, to be in the highest degree unjust, without, however, admitting that slaveholding itself is a crime.<sup>221</sup>

<sup>219</sup> Ibid., p. 479, 480.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid., p. 480.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid., p. 483.

Hodge, unable to fathom the intensity of the abolitionists' moral outrage, drove the logic in this essay to its inexorable conclusions about abolitionist commitments and presuppositions: his Federalist-Whig assumptions legitimated an appropriate hierarchical ordering of human society which was not countermanded in Scripture; the tradition of natural or inalienable rights (in a Jeffersonian sense) inevitably required compromise in any particular society; and since Christianity "operates as an alternative" it was never "designed to tear up institutions of society by the roots." Hodge denied that treating slaves "as property"—a mischievously ambiguous term, he asserted—was the equivalent of treating them as things. In a rebuttal of Francis Wayland's *Elements of Moral Science*, Hodge maintained that governments possessed an inherent right to govern some citizens "by laws in the formation of which they had no voice" when "the public welfare" was at stake.<sup>222</sup> He left unanswered how or when such political commonweal was to be defined or determined.

Hodge concluded his article by claiming he had "another motive in the preparation of this article." He insisted, in the first place, that the abolitionists, inside and outside the Presbyterian church "retarded the progress of freedom," embittered the political community, and divided the Christian church. Antislavery societies, he insisted, ought to address the "improvement, intellectual and moral, of the slaves themselves" and simultaneously contain the westward expansion of slavery. Emancipation itself, he asserted, was a means to the ultimate goal of improvement of the slaves' "human liberty and happiness." Finally, he contended, if abolitionism succeeded then the ecclesial alienation between "North and South" will "become permanent" and, in its train, perpetuate the "continuance and greater severity of slavery." To conclude the article he proffered a warning to the South.

The South, therefore, has to choose between emancipation by the silent and holy influence of the gospel, securing the elevation of the slave to the stature and character of freemen, or abide the issue of a long continued conflict against the laws of God. . . . It may be object that if the slaves are allowed so to improve as to become freemen, the next step in their progress is that they should become citizens . . . We admit that is so. . . . Still they are men; their color does not place them beyond the operation of the principle of the gospel, or from under the protection of God.<sup>223</sup>

<sup>222</sup> This last proposition is not different from that argued later by John C. Calhoun in the famed *Disquisition on Government* (early 1840s) in which Calhoun made it clear that a "good" society was dependent on restricting the sphere of liberty to the "intelligent" and the "deserving." See McKittrick, *Slavery Defended*, pp. 6–11.

<sup>223</sup> Hodge, "Slavery," p. 510.



Significantly downplayed in this 1836 article was the linkage of racial inferiority and slavery. With patriarchal and Whig assumptions fully evident, Hodge argued that slavery was analogous to the hierarchical social and political conventions in voting privileges, marriage, women's rights, parent-child relationships, and employer-employee arrangements.<sup>224</sup> But he did not explicitly justify slavery on the basis of racial inferiority. As we shall see, Hodge eventually condemned the South's insistence on the twin ideologies of "perpetual slavery"<sup>225</sup> and racial inferiority. But that condemnation came only *after* his trying to find a "mediating way" among Presbyterians and *after* his realization that scientists engaged in the "unity of mankind" controversies used science to substantiate views about the supposed racial inferiority of African Americans.

Hodge and his colleagues in *The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* wrote more than a dozen articles on American slavery in decades prior to the Civil War. In "Abolitionism," published in 1844, Hodge repeated his ideas of 1836. "We utterly repudiate the charge that we are the advocates of the slave laws in the South, because we hold that slaveholding is not in itself a crime."<sup>226</sup> This distinction between slavery "in general" and the abuse of slaves in a particular or local cultural setting was reiterated in 1846. This time he was writing to defend the legitimacy of the Roman Catholic church as a true Christian church while deploring the abuses that Hodge acknowledged to be present in the "Romanist Church." The "Church of Rome" was a bona fide Christian church "in general" and its abuses did not disqualify it, as the 1845 General Assembly of the Presbyterian church had declared. By analogy, Hodge

<sup>224</sup> In a long discussion about slavery and natural rights, Hodge wrote

. . . general good requires us to deprive the whole female sex of the gift of self-government. They have no voice in the formation of the laws which dispose of their persons and property. . . . We treat minions in the same way. . . . We moreover decide that a majority of one may make laws for the whole community, no matter whether the numerical majority have more wisdom or virtue than the ministry or not. . . . It [i.e., slavery] is analogous to all other social institutions. They are all of them encroachments on human rights, from the freest democracy to the most absolute despotism. (*Ibid.*, p. xxx)

This argument was repeated in 1838 when he wrote more explicitly about emancipation by comparing slave-owner relationships with women-men hierarchies. See Charles Hodge, "West India Emancipation," *BRPR* 10 (1838): 603-604. Hodge's views about women and their role in society beg for more fulsome treatment. Because those views are so unpalatable to our postmodern thought, they still require examination and contextualization. One place to begin, though it is quite unreliable, is Ronald W. Hogeland, "Charles Hodge, The Association of Gentlemen and Ornamental Womanhood: 1825-1855," *Journal of Presbyterian Church History* 53 (1097): 239-255. Decidedly more helpful is Lois A. Boyd and R. Douglas Breckenridge, *Presbyterian Women in America: Two Centuries of a Quest for Status* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1983).

<sup>225</sup> Charles Hodge, "The General Assembly," *BRPR* 36 (1864): 538-551.

<sup>226</sup> Charles Hodge, "Abolitionism," *BRPR* 16 (1844): 545-581.



argued, slavery *per se* was not immoral. Only by examining the practice of slavery in a specific socio-cultural setting could one determine its particular morality or immorality. "We must discriminate," Hodge insisted, "between slavery and its separable adjuncts . . . between the possession of power and the unjust exercise of it."<sup>227</sup>

The same year (1846) that Hodge was elected the moderator of the Presbyterians' General Assembly, he wrote another essay about slavery, this time defending the denomination's "middle of the road" position in the light of criticisms from Presbyterians from Canada, Scotland, and Ireland.<sup>228</sup> This same essay detailed the debates that occurred at the Assembly prior to passing a resolution that "no further action upon this subject [slavery] is at present needed."<sup>229</sup> Hodge supported that resolution, though he must have surely known that controversy could not be suppressed by mere ecclesial proclamation.

In 1849 Hodge repeated his concerns about American slavery with an article entitled "Emancipation." This essay was occasioned by the 1849 Kentucky convention which was called to debate a proposal to amend the state's

<sup>227</sup> In this polemical controversy about the Church Hodge has some very harsh things to say about American slavery.

Slavery is a heinous crime; it degrades human beings into things; it forbids marriage; it destroys the domestic relations; it separates parents and children, husbands and wives; it legalizes what God forbids, and forbids what God enjoins; it keeps its victims in ignorance of the gospel; it denies to labour its wages, subjects the persons, the virtue and the happiness of the many to the caprice of one; it involves the violation of all social rights and duties, and therefore is the greatest of social crimes. ("Is The Church of Rome A Part of the Visible Church?" *BRPR* 18 [1846]: 321–322)

<sup>228</sup> "It is the want of sense," Hodge wrote to his friend William Cunningham, principal of New College at Edinburgh and leader in the Free Church of Scotland, "as much as the want of justice, manifested in such effusions [i.e., from the Scottish Presbyterians] and in the proceedings of your emancipation societies that tries our patience" (quoted in *LCH*, p. 359).

<sup>229</sup> Charles Hodge, "The General Assembly," *BRPR* 18 (1836): 420–428. In this article Hodge argued that the nation—and the Presbyterians—were divided into three classes regarding slavery. One group (abolitionists) held that slavery was a sin and ought to be "made a term of Christian communion." A second class maintained the opposite, namely that "slavery is a very good and desirable institution and ought to be perpetuated." Both of these positions he describes as untenable and unscriptural. The third was a coalition of persons who endorsed the Assembly's 1845 declaration that "slaveholding was not in itself sinful [but] there are many things which slaveholders often do and too often justify, which are sinful." Hodge maintained that this third position was the official position of the Old School Presbyterian Church. This position, which was the equivalent of Hodge's, also had a political outcome. Local judicatories within the Presbyterian denomination were to be the arbitrators of slaverholders' sinful behaviors. In essence, the Assembly in the mid-1840s determined that American slavery was a regional issue and relegated decisions regarding the morality of slavery to local communities. It was the moral equivalent of an ecclesial "popular sovereignty" dictum in the political sphere.

constitution which would gradually emancipate all slaves in the state. Hodge noted that

Presbyterians have taken the lead in this struggle. . . . As far as we know there is not a single Presbyterian minister, whose name is found among the advocates of slavery. . . . It is now seen that the principles which our church has always avowed on this subject, are as much opposed to the doctrine that slavery is a good institution, which ought to be perpetuated; as to the opposite dogma, that slaveholding is in itself sinful, and a bar to Christian communion. . . . The old school Presbyterians have been the great conservative body, in reference to this subject in our country. They have stood up as a wall against the flood of abolitionism, which would have overwhelmed the church and riven asunder the state. But at the same time they have been the truest friends of slaves and the most effectual advocacy of emancipation. . . . We sincerely rejoice that the [Kentucky] Presbyterians as a body, were found on the right side in this great conflict, and that the failure [i.e., of the emancipation amendment] deplored, is not to be imputed to their remissness or indifference.<sup>230</sup>

Louis Tappan, a leader in the Northern antislavery movement who noted Hodge's advocacy for emancipation, wrote Hodge in late 1849 wondering if Hodge had abandoned his earlier views about slavery. Privately, Hodge was increasingly less sanguine about the nation's direction and the church's role in it. In a letter to William Cunningham of Edinburgh, he wrote:

I most earnestly wish, however, that the churches of the United States could be stirred up to do something more than they have been doing of late years in regard to slavery, at least the abolition of what all condemn, such as the prohibition of instruction and the separation of families. . . . I will continue to do what I can to preserve peace, as I am satisfied that nothing we can do will have any beneficial effect. . . .<sup>231</sup>

But this 1849 article signaled a shift in Hodge's perception about American slavery. Hodge no longer talked about slavery but "Negro slavery." That is, to the best of my knowledge, Hodge began to discern in the late 1840s the linkage between racial beliefs and the institution of American slavery. While affirming the "unity of mankind" motif and yet holding that it "would be folly to deny that blacks are as a race [culturally] inferior to whites," Hodge sensed that slavery had become entangled with America's racial views.

<sup>230</sup> Charles Hodge, "Emancipation," p. 585.

<sup>231</sup> Quoted in *LCH*, p. 357.

When therefore the question is present to a community whether an inferior race, hitherto slaves, shall be emancipated, one of the strongest sources of opposition to such a measure is sure to be found in the pride of race. The whites, especially the less cultivated portion of them, revolt at the idea that the distinction between themselves and those whom they have always looked upon as their inferiors, should be done away. They regard it as an insult, or as robbing them of a privilege.<sup>232</sup>

Apparently others, especially Southerners, accused Hodge of changing his mind. Some claimed he was reneging on his proslavery sympathies. Several lumped him together with Northern abolitionists. Of particular importance in these exchanges were the disputes with James Henly Thornwell, the well-known, erudite South Carolinian Presbyterian theologian and called by his contemporaries the "Calhoun of the Church." Like Hodge, Thornwell appealed to an authoritative Bible to justify American slavery but Thornwell drew different conclusions than Hodge.<sup>233</sup> Whereas Hodge claimed that the Scriptures passively acquiesced in the existence of slavery, Thornwell claimed the Bible actually sanctioned slavery. Moreover, Thornwell maintained, in a manner similar to Hodge's earlier arguments, that American slavery was, constitutionally speaking, under the jurisdiction of local governing units rather than the federal government. While Hodge in 1849 called for the "elevation of the slave to the stature of the freeman" Thornwell asserted that "Our [i.e., Southern Presbyterians] design in giving them the Gospel is not to civilize

<sup>232</sup> Hodge, "Emancipation," p. 518-519.

<sup>233</sup> Hodge never got on well with Thornwell whom he knew and respected. Hodge once referred to Thornwell as an "ultra-Calvinist." As late as 1865, Hodge vigorously opposed Thornwell's "spirituality" of the church doctrine. Hodge insisted on a more precise definition of the word "spiritual," and then claimed that Thornwell's understanding of the church "is most obviously false" because of the construal Thornwell put on the word "spiritual."

The word is understood [by Thornwell] to be so restrictive as to confine it to what pertains exclusively to the religious element of our nature, to what concerns the method of salvation, as distinct from the law of God. . . . The word was understood in a sense so limited as to deny to the church the right to protest against the slave trade, or unjust slave laws, as well as the rebellion and disloyalty. It is not disrespect to say that men adopt theories to suit their purposes. . . . It is easy for feelings to beguile the understanding. . . . We find Dr. Thornwell preaching from the sacred desk elaborate sermons on slavery. . . . The pulpits of the South rang perpetually . . . with political harangues . . . to "fire the Southern heart" in the great struggle. . . . We do not blame those brethren for violating a false principle [i.e., the spirituality of the church doctrine] and disregarding their own erroneous theory, but we protest against their condemning in others what they justify in themselves. . . . This new theory of the church is as practically dead . . . as is the theory of secession, and both, as Siamese twins, may be allowed to pass into oblivion together. (Hodge, "The Princeton Review on the State of the Country and Church," *BRPR* 37 [1865]: 646-647)



them, not to exalt them into citizens or freemen, but to save them.”<sup>234</sup> As the “irrepressible conflict” drew nearer, and the expansion of slavery into the Western states exacerbated the national debate, Hodge’s views about slavery, race, and the containment of slavery to existing Southern states alienated increasing numbers in the South, especially Presbyterians.

While Americans divided over such issues as the Compromise of 1850, the Dred Scott Case, Free Soil debates, “Bleeding Kansas,” and John Brown’s Raid, a hiatus appeared in Hodge’s engagement of political and ecclesial disputes in the early 1850s. This retreat was prompted, in part, by several personal and health-related crises as well as a desire to write on other pressing theological issues, including his growing concern about biblical criticism, Scriptural authority, and Presbyterian ecclesiology.<sup>235</sup> Only in 1857 did Hodge return to the political fray with the publication of a collection of essays previously printed in his journal under the title of *Essays and Reviews*. He included both “Slavery” (1836) and “Emancipation” (1849).

In 1860 two of Hodge’s articles were reprinted in a widely-circulated pro-Southern compendium entitled *Cotton is King and Proslavery Arguments*. One was Hodge’s essay on the Fugitive Slave Law; the other was the 1836 article “Slavery.” The details of the circumstances surrounding the permission to print Hodge’s essays remain shrouded by the lack of clear manuscript evidence. Apparently, Hodge was offended at their reprinting. His essays were placed beside ardent proslavery advocates at a time when Hodge was undergoing a significant shift in his thoughts about American slavery. What is un-

<sup>234</sup> I am indebted to Walter H. Conser’s *God and the Natural World: Religion and Science in Antebellum America* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1993), pp. 107–109 for several of these ideas and the Thornwell references. Thornwell has recently become the object of considerable attention especially by historians of American slavery. See especially Eugene Genovese, “James Thornwell and Southern Religion,” *Southern Partisan* 7 (1987): 17–21 and Eugene Genovese and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, “Religious Ideals of Southern Slave Society,” *The Georgian Historical Quarterly* 70 (1986): 1–16. Also James O. Farmer, *The Metaphysical Confederacy: James Henley Thornwell and the Synthesis of Southern Values* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1986).

<sup>235</sup> See *LCH*, pp. 369–383. In the summer of 1848, Hodge fell, striking his head on a sofa. According to his biographer, Hodge never fully recovered until late 1855. In the same period, Hodge sustained the deaths of three significant persons in his life: Sarah Bache Hodge died on Christmas day, 1849; Samuel Miller died in January 1850; and Archibald Alexander in October 1851. His health so deteriorated that he wrote to his brother in the summer of 1851 of his depression. “No days have intervened that I have not often and literally shed tears to her memory; no week has passed that I have not been twice or oftener to her grave. . . . I think of her now with less of that dreadful sense of bereavement. . . . I turn my heart toward her [Sarah] with much of the same feeling with which a Romanist, who stops short of idolatry, looks up to his patron saint.” Afterward, between 1853 and 1860 Hodge wrote more than 34 articles, at least twelve of which dealt with ecclesial issues and the unravelling of the Presbyterian denominations.



contestable, however, is that the editor of *Cotton is King* intentionally declined to print two provocative sections of Hodge's 1836 article. Deleting those sections—one at the beginning and one at the end—significantly altered Hodge's 1836 case. Especially misleading was the erasing of Hodge's rebuke of the South for its refusal to elevate "slaves to the stature of freemen" and Hodge's assertion that "slaves are not of a different race from their masters." Hodge's opposition to American slavery in 1836 was soft, mediatorial, untested in the nation's political arenas. By 1860, however, Hodge's position was not parallel with or supportive of the other Southern clergy contributors to *Cotton as King* such as Thorton Stringfellow's *A Brief Examination of Scripture Testimony on the Institution of Slavery* (1850) or Albert Taylor Bledsoe's *An Essay on Liberty and Slavery* (1856).<sup>236</sup>

By 1864 Hodge soundly denounced American slavery in the South:

One of the saddest proofs of injustice of the Southern laws, is, that after more than a century, the vast body of the slaves of the extreme Southern states are in a condition of greatest degradation. That is not to be attributed to the inferiority of their race, but to the systematic effort to prevent their improvement. . . .<sup>237</sup>

The following year, under pressure to justify his journal's Unionist position, Hodge reflected on his discussions about slavery over the past quarter century. After reiterating his 1836 position and believing that "the whole system would be gradually, peacefully, and speedily abolished, and the slaves elevated and prepared for liberty," Hodge scolded Southerners. "The South not only refused to enter on any course intended to the abolition of slavery, but became more and more enamored with the system, more than ever designed to perpetuate and extend it; and, at last, to accomplish this end, rose in rebellion for the overthrow of the Constitution and the violent disruption of the Union." Hodge concluded his essay by endorsing the "principles on which President Lincoln acted [in the Emancipation Proclamation], and in which we heartily concurred. . . ."<sup>238</sup>

<sup>236</sup> Ebenezer N. Elliot, ed., *Cotton is King, and Proslavery Arguments: Comprising the Writings of Hammond, Harper, Christy, Stringfellow, Hodge, Bledsoe, and Cartwright on this Important Subject* (Augusta, GA: Pritchard, Abbott & Loomis, 1860). For another interpretation of this issue, see Ralph J. Danhof, *Charles Hodge as Dogmatician* (Goes, the Netherlands: Oosterbaan and le Cointre, 1929).

<sup>237</sup> Charles Hodge, "The General Assembly," *BRPR* 36 (1864): 548. I am indebted to William Barker, "The Social Views of Charles Hodge (1797–1878): A Study in 19th Century Calvinism and Conservatism," *Presbyterian: Covenant Seminary Review* 1 (1975): 1–22.

<sup>238</sup> Charles Hodge, "The Princeton Review on the State of the Country and of the Church," *BRPR* 37 (1865): 639–641.

As late as 1871, apparently still smarting from the criticism he endured over his writings about slavery, Hodge insisted that he had not wavered about Scripture, slaveholding, and American slavery. "The great popular mistake on this subject—a mistake which produced incalculable evil—was confounding slaveholding with slave laws. . . . Because the laws of a slaveholding state may be unscriptural and wicked, it does not follow that slaveholding itself is sinful."<sup>239</sup> His own writings made this 1871 scholastic distinction seem hollow and irrelevant.

How then does one interpret this aspect of Hodge's Reformed theology and discourse? Only a few historians have tried to put Hodge's discourse about American slavery in perspective. Of the 1836 article in the *Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* H. Sheldon Smith said it was "as manna from heaven to proslavery southerners."<sup>240</sup> Larry E. Tise, in what is arguably the best treatment of American proslavery thought, asserts that Hodge's essays were

perhaps the most important and instructive contributions toward the formation of a national proslavery ideology of any nineteenth century America. In fact, when on the eve of the Civil War southerners began publishing in vast volumes the most important proslavery writings in America, Hodge was the only author to have two essays included in the most popular of such volumes, *Cotton is King and Proslavery Arguments* (1860).<sup>241</sup>

However, Tise does not consider any of Hodge's later articles about slavery where Hodge's pro-Unionist sympathies were explicitly expressed, the racial underpinnings of slavery clearly discerned, and American-fashioned slaveholding more roundly denounced. No historian I know has traced or interpreted the growing rancor of Southern Presbyterians toward Hodge. The editors of Augusta's newspaper, the *Constitutionalist* (March 1861), reviewed Hodge's essay on the "State of the Country" essay in the *Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* and levelled the charge of "treason" against Hodge.<sup>242</sup> "Many warm admirers of Dr. Hodge feel constrained . . . to exclaim, et tu Brute!" His earlier words about slavery, they recalled, had been "like apples of gold" to the South. "The impression produced by the [Princeton] *Review* [i.e., in 1861] will be not less false than those by Mrs. Stowe's work of fiction." Comparing

<sup>239</sup> Charles Hodge, "Retrospect of the History of the Princeton Review" in the *Index Volume* of the *Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* (Philadelphia: Peter Walker, 1871), p. 17.

<sup>240</sup> Smith, *In His Image But*, p. 80.

<sup>241</sup> Larry E. Tise, *Proslavery: A History of the Defense of Slavery in America, 1701–1840* (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 1987), p. 278.

<sup>242</sup> *Constitutionalist*, 22 March–24 March 1861. The article about Hodge was carried on the front page of this famed newspaper. On page 2 of the same edition, was reprinted the "Constitution of the Confederate States of America."

Hodge's ideas to Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was an ultimate dismissal, if not political trashing.

My own analysis of Hodge's views about slavery is that the 1836 "Slavery" article was written initially as a lobbying effort for the "Old Schoolers" in the Presbyterian church. In that context and at that time, he was morally insensitive to American slavery and naive about national political matters. However, as the national crisis unfolded from 1840 to 1860 Hodge, while believing himself to be consistent with the 1836 propositions, changed his mind. Why and how he changed his views about American slavery is more pertinent and more complex.

Richard Carwardine has thoroughly traced the "changing patterns of Protestant partisanship" in the 1850s. "The impetus of the North's evangelical thinking moved it toward the Republicans' postmillennial nationalism, which linked moral and economic progress."<sup>243</sup> While Southerners were elaborating a Christian apology for slavery and seeking to construct a society that incorporated slavery's social arrangements, Northern Reformed theologians like Hodge integrated the new Republican-party ideology.<sup>244</sup> Hodge's clearly avoided the "dour Presbyterian bachelor" Democrat, James Buchanan (who vowed to preserve the Union) and Hodge rejected outright the nativist "American Party" composed mostly of former conservative Whigs. Instead, Hodge voted for the Republican Frémont in 1856 and the political ideology of "Free Soil, Free Speech, Free Men." It was a significant shift "to the left" for an Old School Presbyterian.<sup>245</sup> A vote for Frémont's "Black Republicans" in 1856 implied not only a vote for possible disunion but also a vote against slavery. As James McPherson has outlined, Republicans in 1856 were "a menace to white supremacy in both North and South."<sup>246</sup> Democrats in

<sup>243</sup> Richard J. Carwardine, *Evangelicals and Politics in Antebellum America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), p. 272. While Carwardine pays scant attention to Hodge, I am especially indebted to this insightful work for my understanding of Hodge's political environment.

<sup>244</sup> Eric Foner has convincingly demonstrated that the Southern proslavery arguments in the 1850s were not merely a defense of rationalization for slavery. They were also a critique of Northern society, especially of its materialism, "wage-slavery," individualism, and secularism. George Fitzhugh's *Cannibals All! Or Slaves Without Masters* (1857) and his *Sociology of the South* (1854) are prime examples of this expansive Southern critique of the North. See Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: Ideology of the Republican Party Before the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp. 66–72.

During this same decade, Hodge's arguments against slavery contained severe criticisms of Southern culture and economics. His comments about slavery, therefore, are not to be interpreted apart from these larger, more complex controversies.

<sup>245</sup> See LCH, p. 230. One standard work on the emergence of the Republican party is Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor*.

<sup>246</sup> For a crisp outline of this election see McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 153–169.



Pittsburgh insisted that Frémont's party intended to "elevate the African in this country to complete equality of political and economic condition with the white man."<sup>247</sup> I suggest that Hodge's own Federalist-Whig-Republican social and cultural ideologies provide a more fulsome explanation of the evolution of his views about slavery. Further, those Republican views need to be integrated with Hodge's Reformed theology, his scientific convictions about the "unity of the race," and his own anxieties about the split of the Presbyterian Church.<sup>248</sup>

Hodge's assumptions and values about race and racism are equally complex and largely unexplored.<sup>249</sup> By the 1850s he clearly saw the relationship of racism and slavery but the larger question of the proper place of African Americans in American society is unexplored in Hodge's writings. As Eric Foner has argued, the Republican party did develop after 1856 a policy that recognized the essential humanity of Blacks, though it was flawed by many racial stereotypes.

Hodge's views of race were more explicitly linked with his "unity of mankind" arguments, which I have outlined earlier. In this sense Hodge's published views of race blended a Reformed theology (with its strong sense of divine sovereignty, human's *imago dei*, and human fallenness), his science (notably, his argument for the polygenic created order), and his Whig-Republican political views. While he scorned Southerners (especially Southern theologians) for their failure to attend to the "improvement of the Negro," he remained less explicit on how such "improvement" should be systematically and politically accomplished in the North. Nevertheless, his endorsement of the "moderate" wing of the Republican party, led by Lincoln, would be an entry point for this larger, untold discussion of Hodge's thought.<sup>250</sup>

Finally, any analysis of Hodge's views of race and slavery must be nuanced by his concern about the splintering of the Presbyterian Church. The splintering of nearly every Protestant denomination—the Presbyterians split twice in three decades over issues that involved slavery—revealed the depth of the theological, cultural and ideological fissures that separated the North and South. It is not surprising, therefore, that Hodge's evolving assessment of American slavery and race were entangled with specific ecclesial anxieties. But

<sup>247</sup> Quoted in McPherson, *ibid.*, p. 159.

<sup>248</sup> For a concise and masterful exposition of public opinion about the slavery controversy of the decade prior to the war, see Kenneth Stampp, *America in 1857: A Nation on the Brink* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), chapter 5.

<sup>249</sup> William M. Swartley's *Slavery, Sabbath, War and Women: Case Issues in Biblical Interpretation* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1983) is so historically ill-founded that his discussion of Hodge and slavery is singularly unhelpful.

<sup>250</sup> See Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor*, especially chapter 8, "Republicans and Race."



it was not the first nor last time American theologians opted for ecclesial unity rather than a moral choice that might divide.

However one analyzes Hodge's theological, political, racial, and ecclesial appraisals of American slavery, it is clear that this Reformed theologian was deeply engaged in the controversy over America's most tragic and reprehensible institution. His quest for a theological and ecclesial middle way and his socio-political assumptions rendered his discourse about slavery simultaneously insightful and irrelevant.

Controversies about American slavery inevitably thrust Hodge into an even wider political discourse in antebellum America, namely, the volatile issues leading to the Civil War. To those equally formidable essays we now turn. In my opinion few, if any, other American Reformed theologians, rank beyond his equal as he addressed the chaos and tragedy of America's "irrepressible conflict."

### HODGE AND THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR

No episode in American history has preoccupied scholars or myth-makers like the Civil War. It was "a war that never goes away."<sup>251</sup> Historians are still riveted by unresolved debates about its ultimate causes; analyses about the period's leaders; the unparalleled human suffering unleashed in the battles of the "first modern war"; the transformation of American politics, economy, and social relationships that followed the war; the "unwritten war" in the minds and letters of countless Americans, North and South; and, of course, America's unquenchable fascination with Abraham Lincoln.<sup>252</sup> Like most

<sup>251</sup> See James McPherson, "A War that Never Goes Away" in *The Civil War*, Stephen Sears, ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1991), pp. 5-13.

<sup>252</sup> The amount of literature on Lincoln and the Civil War is almost unfathomable. As one well-known scholar has observed, there are over 50,000 titles of books and articles on Lincoln alone! For a brief introduction to this historiography see "Historians and the Civil War" in *Why the South Lost the Civil War*, Richard E. Beringer, et. al., eds. (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 1986), pp. 4-38 and Eugene Murdock, ed., *The Civil War in the North: A Selective Annotated Bibliography* (New York: Harpers and Row, 1987).

I have relied heavily on the following works to interpret the context for Hodge's comments about the war: David M. Potter, *The Impending Crisis, 1848-1861* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976); William R. Taylor, *Cavalier and Yankee* (New York: George Braziller, 1961); William Brock, *Conflict and Transformation* (New York: Penguin Books, 1973); idem., *Parties and Political Conscience: American Dilemmas, 1840-1850* (Millwood Press, NY: KTO Press, 1979); Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party Before the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970); Kenneth Stampp, ed., *The Causes of the Civil War* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1959); idem., *The Imperiled Union: Essays on the Background of the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980); idem., *America in 1857: A Nation on the Brink* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980); James McPherson, *The Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New

Americans, Charles Hodge was both absorbed and appalled by the war. It directly affected his family, upset his emotional well-being, and raised profound disillusionments about the Church in American society. His lucid essays and sober reflections about the war constitute, in my opinion, yet another dimension of a Reformed theologian engaged with the vital issues of his day.

The early months of 1861 witnessed a "wholesale calamity" almost beyond analysis—for the nation, the Presbyterian Church, and particularly for Charles Hodge. The war erupted in April 1861 and historians have ever since groped for adequate categories and descriptions for a tragedy of this magnitude. As late as his incomparable Second Inaugural Address in March 1865, President Lincoln himself could neither define the conflict constitutionally nor comprehend the war's pathos. "All dreaded it—all sought to avert it. . . . Neither party expected for the war, the magnitude, or the duration which it has already attained. . . . Each looked for an easier triumph, and a result less fundamental and astounding. Both read the same Bible, and prayed to the same God; and each invokes His aid against the other. . . . The prayers of both could not be answered; that of neither has been answered fully."<sup>253</sup> Many have deemed the war an "irrepressible conflict"; some have called the war America's "second American revolution"; a recent magisterial book calls it "The Battle Cry of Freedom." Comparatively few historians have attended to the religious dimensions of the war and the best of this genre called it "the American apoca-

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York: Oxford University Press, 1988); idem., *Abraham Lincoln and the Second American Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); William Frechling, *Road to Disunion: Secessionists at Bay, 1776–1854* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Mark E. Neely, ed., *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory: The Civil War in Art* (New York: Orion Books, 1993); Daniel Aaron, *The Unwritten War: American Writers and the Civil War* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987); and Edmund Wilson, *Patriotic Gore: Studies in the Literature of the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962).

Regarding Lincoln, I have used Stephen Oates, *With Malice Toward None: The Life of Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Harper and Row, 1977); idem., *Abraham Lincoln: The Man Behind the Myths* (New York: Harper and Row, 1984); Mark E. Neely, Jr., *The Last Best Hope on Earth: Abraham Lincoln and the Promise of America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993); idem., *The Abraham Lincoln Encyclopedia* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1982); Richard N. Current, *The Lincoln Nobody Knows* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1963); William J. Wolf, *The Almost Chosen People: A Study of the Religion of Abraham Lincoln* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1959); and Glen E. Thurow, *Abraham Lincoln and American Political Religion* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1976).

<sup>253</sup> Lincoln's "political religion" has been extensively scrutinized, with opinions ranging over a wide spectrum. See William Corlett, "The Availability of Lincoln's Political Religion," *Political Theory* 10 (1982): 520–540. Corlett tracks various opinions about the interplay of Lincoln's religious convictions, political commitments, leadership roles, and the American republican tradition.

lypse.”<sup>254</sup> More recently, Ann C. Rose concluded that the war occurred in the midst of an increasingly secularized America and that America’s “Christian frame of reference” competed with conceptions of the war that were “unconcerned with religion, to the point that pious allusions became one set of symbols among several. A century earlier, a Yale professor, Henry A. Beers, stated quite the opposite: he called the war the “first truly religious war ever waged.”<sup>255</sup>

None of these generalizations about the war drove the theologizing at Princeton. Writing in Hodge’s *The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* an unknown writer, stunned by the enormity and madness of it all, lamented in July 1861, “And oh, what was it [i.e., the war] but a ghastly hallucination which could lead them to commit wholesale robbery, perjury and treason verily thinking they were doing God’s service.”<sup>256</sup>

The nation was not the only institution torn apart by the war.<sup>257</sup> Hardly

<sup>254</sup> James Moorhead, *The American Apocalypse: Yankee Protestants and the Civil War, 1860–1869* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978). Moorhead has argued that the war not only altered the nature of religious hopes for America but it gave rise to the belief that the war was an eschatological contest to determine the course of American and world history. More recently Ann C. Rose in *Victorian America and the Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) traces the impact of the war on seventy-five men and women. An early chapter seeks to interpret these Victorians’ religious responses to the war. Though she never mentions Hodge, he would not fit readily into her analysis or assumptions.

On a broader religious scale, see George Frederickson, *The Inner Civil War: Northern Intellectuals and the Crisis of Union* (New York: Harper, 1965). For other religious interpretations, undeveloped and comparatively few as there are, see the bibliography by David B. Chesebrough, ed., *“God Has Ordained This War”: Sermons on the Sectional Crisis, 1850–1865* (Columbia: University of South Carolina, 1991). Richard Carwardine is especially insightful in aligning various political perspectives of American and British evangelical traditions. He sees many of the North’s evangelicals more allied with Britain’s evangelicalism than with Southern evangelicalism. He is less helpful with regard to Old School Presbyterians like Hodge. See Richard Carwardine, “Evangelicals, Politics, and the Coming of the American Civil War: A Transatlantic Perspective” in *Evangelicalism: Comparative Studies of Popular Protestantism in North America, the British Isles, and Beyond, 1700–1990*, Marl Noll, David W. Beecington, and George A. Rawlyk, eds. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 198–218.

<sup>255</sup> I am indebted for both these quotes to Daniel Aaron, *The Unwritten War*, p. 18 and p. 21.

<sup>256</sup> John McIlvane, “American Nationality,” *BRPR* 33 (1861): 639. McIlvane, an 1836 graduate of Princeton College and a student of Hodge’s until 1840, served as a Presbyterian pastor in Rochester, New York and was appointed as the chairperson of the department of belle lettres at Princeton College in 1860. While in Rochester, McIlvane was the pastor and “close friend and intellectual companion” of Lewis Henry Morgan, the pioneer in American anthropology whose *Systems of Consanguinity and Affinity of the Human Family* (1871) proposed a “theory of kinship” that altered the nature of American social science. See especially, Thomas R. Trautmann, *Lewis Henry Morgan and the Invention of Kinship* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1987). Chapter 4 details the relationship of McIlvane and Morgan.

<sup>257</sup> The best treatment of the splintering of American denominations is C. C. Goen, *Broken Churches, Broken Nations: Denominational Schisms and the Coming of the Civil War* (Macon, GA:



a denomination in America was spared from the war's maelstrom. "Alas," wrote Charles Hodge in July 1861 after the severing of the Presbyterian denomination during the General Assembly meeting at Philadelphia in May,

Presbyterians were in arms against Presbyterians. . . . The General Assembly was called upon to take sides. . . . Our church was as much divided as the country. It was the case of a mother who was called upon to take part for one child against another. It was in vain she urged that both were her children; . . . God had not made her a judge or divider in such matters. This plea availed nothing. She was in the hands of the more powerful of the two, and speak must.<sup>258</sup>

Hodge, the inveterate reconciler, lobbied strenuously prior to the 1861 General Assembly (Old School) to head off the Church's split and, eventually to derail the famed Spring Resolutions. The Rev. Gardiner Spring of New York City had proposed that, after a day of prayer, the General Assembly adopt a set of resolutions that required all Presbyterians to declare their loyalty to the Constitution and the federal government. In the time-honored Presbyterian custom, the resolutions were remanded to a committee. Hodge politicked vigorously for the committee's majority report which ameliorated the Spring Resolutions so as to not alienate Southern Presbyterians. A minority report openly endorsed the original Spring Resolutions. In the end, Hodge and the majority report lost when the Assembly voted narrowly to accept the "minority report." Hodge refused "at the command of an excited multitude, to sing the 'Star Spangled Banner' at the Lord's table."<sup>259</sup>

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Mercer University Press, 1985). See also William A. Clebsch, "Christian Interpretations of the War," *Church History* 30 (1961): 212-222.

<sup>258</sup> Charles Hodge, "The General Assembly," *BRPR* 33 (1861): 542-544.

<sup>259</sup> Hodge, "General Assembly," p. 544. Hodge and several others "gave notice they would enter a protest" to the General Assembly's decision. Since Hodge's name is listed first in the signatories of the "Protest" one can assume that he was its major author. "We deny the right of the General Assembly to decide the political question, to what government the allegiance of Presbyterians, as citizens, is due, and its right to make that decision as a condition of membership." Such a policy, argued Hodge, was a departure from previous actions of the General Assembly which refused to sanction a particular theory of the Constitution and that the policy, in light of the fact that many Southern representatives to the 1861 General Assembly refused to attend, was "unjust and cruel in its bearing on our Southern brethren." The General Assembly officially put down Hodge's "Protest" by quoting Hodge's own argument in the January issue of the *Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review*. After offering its own analysis of biblical texts, the conditions of church membership implied in the Assembly's action, and the fairness to Southern members, the General Assembly concluded its rebuttal noting "It is enough to record our simple denial of the opinions [i.e., Hodge's] expressed." The case Hodge argued was summarily closed (*ibid.*, pp. 548, 556).



Regarding the 1861 Assembly's action, Hodge wrote the following:

We believe the course of the South in its attempt to break up our glorious union, is unreasonable, ungrateful and wicked. We believe the war in which the government is now engaged is entirely righteous. . . . We believe that it is the duty of every man in these United States, to do all that in him lies "to strengthen, sustain and encourage the Federal Government in the conflict in which it is now engaged. . . . But our private convictions have nothing to do with the rights of the General Assembly. . . . The church can *only* exercise her power in enforcing the Word of God, in approving what it commands, and condemning what it forbids. A man, in the exercise of things indifferent [i.e., on which the Scriptures are silent] . . . cannot be brought under the censure of the church. . . . The country is in a great conflict. The struggle between the two principles of State sovereignty and of national unity has been transferred from the Senate chamber to the [soldier's] camp. It is a struggle for life. The Assembly was called upon to pronounce judgement on one side or the other. While we concur in that judgement, we deny the right of the court [the General Assembly] to pronounce it.<sup>260</sup>

One part of Hodge's argument was grounded in the same hermeneutical principle through which he viewed the Presbyterian Church's view of slavery: without explicit biblical direction, ecclesiastical censure or excommunication was unjust and unwarranted. The other half of his argument was more pragmatic. Since the Assembly was badly divided, since it was reacting to political "forces" outside its normal jurisdiction, and "since not one could estimate the lamentable consequences to the church, the country and to the cause of truth and religion should the Old School Presbyterian Church be dismembered," Hodge counselled—pleaded—that the denomination wait. Unfortunately, Hodge suffered the malaise of most centrists and mediators—the avoidance of a decisive action often exacerbates a greater crisis. Hodge himself acknowledged, patience and reason were no sufficient buffer to power. The Southern wing of the Presbyterian Church split off. The Presbyterians would not reunite for more than a century.

Rejected by the highest councils of his denomination, over which he had presided as moderator twice (1842 and 1846), Hodge turned his energies to a discussion of the war issues and progress. He followed the details of the war closely. Through the intervention of the brother of Hodge's second wife,

<sup>260</sup> Hodge, "General Assembly," p. 561, 564.

General David Hunter, Hodge kept abreast of the war's battles and strategies by regularly visiting the Union military headquarters in Washington.<sup>261</sup>

Following the secession crisis in South Carolina, Hodge published in 1861 a piece he had written earlier entitled, "The State of the Country." It generated unexpected hostile responses, North and South. Hodge insisted his article was moderate and conciliatory. He argued that the concept of "nation" was historically valid and perpetually inviolate;<sup>262</sup> that the concept of "state sovereignty" was at odds with the ideas of the framers of the Constitution; that the South misinterpreted the North's commitment to abolitionists; that many in the North, like himself, acknowledged that the South had legitimate grievances; that secession was unwise as well as immoral; and that the nation's role as a "city on the hill" as well as the witness of the Christian Church was jeopardized by the threat of secession. As an afterthought, he quickly added that the government should compensate Southerners for all fugitive slaves and that the Missouri Compromise be reestablished as the dividing line between slave and free states.

Hodge was not prepared for the fury his article unleashed. For example, he was stunned by the response his good friend, the Virginian Rev. John Leighton Wilson. Until December 1860 Wilson was the director of foreign missions for the Old School Presbyterian. He left New York City and his office to return to the South early in 1861. Wilson wrote Hodge twice after reading the article.

Your [first] letter fills me with despair. That you . . . one of the best men I ever knew, should evidently approve of what I consider great crimes, and disapprove of what I consider the plainest principles of truth and justice shakes all confidence in human convictions. . . . The difference is in the medium through which we look at the same truth, and the bearing we give it in present circumstances.<sup>263</sup>

<sup>261</sup> General David Hunter was wounded at Bull Run in 1861. In spring of 1862, he commanded Union forces in the South and declared martial law in the islands off the South Carolina and Georgia coasts and ordered the emancipation of all slaves, an order which Lincoln rescinded. Hunter later led Union troops in the Shenandoah Valley campaign in late Spring of 1862. See McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, pp. 499 and 737–739. Examples of Hodge's appraisals of the battles in the war are related in letters to his physician-brother Hugh Hodge in Philadelphia. See especially his description of the first battle of Bull Run or Manasses (21 July 1861), written while visiting the Union's military headquarters in Washington. After mentioning the wounding of David Hunter and noting the fact that Hunter rode a horse from Hodge's stable, Hodge called the battle a disaster and mismanaged. See *LCH*, pp. 470–481. To the best of my knowledge, Hodge never commented on Hunter's savage treatment of citizens in the Shenandoah Valley.

<sup>262</sup> To contextualize Hodge's concerns about the "perpetuity" of the Union, see Kenneth Stampp, *The Imperiled Union* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), especially the opening essay, "The Concept of a Perpetual Union," pp. 3–36.

<sup>263</sup> Charles Hodge to John Leighton Wilson, 20 December 1860, The John Leighton Wilson Papers, Presbyterian Department of History, Montreat, NC.

On 22 December 1860 Wilson plainly terminated his friendship with Hodge when Wilson wrote:

I believe you and thousands like you would suffer a hundred deaths rather than overwhelm your brethren in the South, but I cannot regard the leaders of the party in any other light than as hostile to the interests of the South. I do not expect to pursue this correspondence further. I am afraid the time for argument has gone by. . . . God save us from terrible times and scenes.<sup>264</sup>

Much later (1871) Hodge wrote that his 1861 "State of the Country" article "was received at the South, to our surprise, with universal condemnation, expressed in terms of unmeasured severity. In the North, it was pronounced 'moderate, fair, and reasonable,' except by the Abolitionists, who rivalled their Southern brethren in their denunciations."<sup>265</sup> The barrage of criticism continued into the spring of 1861. On the front page editorial of Augusta's *Constitutionalist* (March 1861) Hodge was first deemed a traitor, then a "mouth-piece of the Republicans," and finally demeaned as an intrusive, naive theologian out of touch with political realities. As an "authority on the Bible, let Dr. Hodge continue to be," opined the editorial. "But let him not reverse Judicial decisions, not sit in judgement on the Constitution—on Republicanism, consolidation, secession or coercion. Abandon the Republican Organon—come back to right reason!"<sup>266</sup> The *Southern Presbyterian* characterized Hodge's article as "unfair, one-sided and a lamentable attack upon the South."<sup>267</sup> Hodge wrote back to the editor seeking reconciliation and explaining his motive for writing the article. "It was intended to produce two effects, within the limited range of its influence, first to convince the South that the mass of Northern people are not abolitionists or hostile to the rights & interests of the South; & second to convince the North that the course adopted by the Abolitionists is unjust & unscriptural." He defended what he had argued earlier, that "the South has just grounds for complaint." "If Southern Men knew the North as we know it, they would no more think of secession than they would of suicide." Regarding the article's assertion that the federal government has the right to quell "any one (state) which attempts secession,"

<sup>264</sup> John Leighton Wilson to Charles Hodge, 22 December 1860, The John Leighton Wilson Papers. See also Hampden C. DuBose. *Memories of Rev. John Leighton Wilson, DD* (Richmond, VA: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1895), especially chapter 22.

<sup>265</sup> Charles Hodge, "Retrospect of the History of the Princeton Review" in the *Index Volume of The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* (Philadelphia: Peter Walker, 1871), p. 32.

<sup>266</sup> *Constitutionalist*, 22 March–24 March 1861.

<sup>267</sup> John H. Rice, "The Princeton Review on the State of the Country," *The Southern Presbyterian Review* 14 (April 1861): 1–44.



Hodge reaffirmed that position but insisted that he nowhere in the article “advocated coercion in the present crisis. It deprecated all appeal to force, & urges acquiescence in the recommendation of ‘a convention of the states, that disunion if it must come, may at least be peacefully effected.’”<sup>268</sup>

In the months and years that followed—with the nation bitterly at war and the Church decisively split—Hodge wrote more than a dozen articles about American political life. In January 1861 Hodge reviewed the famous sermon delivered by the Rev. Benjamin M. Palmer of New Orleans and the first moderator of the new “Southern” Presbyterian Church.<sup>269</sup> “Among the sermons which the present crisis in our national affairs has called forth, this of Dr. Palmer’s stands by itself.” Palmer had argued that all governments possess a stewardship, “a providential trust,” to preserve their way of life. “If then,” preached Palmer, “the South is such a people, what, at this juncture, is their providential trust? I answer, that it is *to conserve and perpetuate the institution of domestic slavery as now existing* [Palmer’s italics].” That particular fiduciary responsibility, Palmer concluded, was a “duty to ourselves, to our slaves, to our world and to almighty God [Palmer’s italics].”

Typically, Hodge responded by reviewing the underlying principle of “sphere sovereignty,” whereby ministers should or should not enter political discourse.<sup>270</sup> Hodge allowed that Palmer, in contradistinction to the “passivity doctrine” of Thornwell, had a right to preach about the South’s national and social dilemma. What Palmer chose to defend, namely a divine defense of the perpetuation of slavery, Hodge found offensive.

<sup>268</sup> Charles Hodge to Editor of the *Southern Presbyterian*, 3 January 1861, APUL.

<sup>269</sup> An abridged edition of this widely circulated sermon may be found in M. W. Armstrong, L. A. Loetscher, and Charles Anderson, eds., *The Presbyterian Enterprise* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1956), pp. 204–209. On another occasion, the notable Mary Chestnut wrote that Palmer’s sermons “stirred my blood, my flesh crimped and tingled . . . A red hot glow of patriotism passed over me. There was an exhortation to fight or die” (C. Vann Woodward, ed., *Mary Chestnut’s Civil War* [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1981], p. 671).

One is reminded of James Silver’s observation that no group in the South exceeded that of the clergy for “a state of mind which made secession possible . . .” (*Confederate Morale and Church Propaganda* [Tuscaloosa, AL: Confederate Publishing, 1957], p. 101).

<sup>270</sup> Hodge demarcated the extent to which he believed the Church had a legitimate voice in the affairs of civil government:

If by politics be meant the policy of states in reference to secular affairs, then it is true that the gospel minister has nothing to do with them in the pulpit. But if by politics we mean the *principles* of civil government, and the duties thence resulting, then politics belong to the higher sphere of morals: and morals is the science of duty, and duty is determined by the law of God. . . . The faithful messengers of God under all dispensations of the Church, have felt officially bound to teach kings and people their duty, and them what God, who is King of nations, as well as King of saints, requires at their hands.” (“Short Notices . . . [Palmer’s] *Thanksgiving Sermon*,” BRPR [1861]: 167)



It [Palmer's sermon] propounds a theory suited to an emergency. It proposes a doctrine which reconciles men's wishes with their conscience. It teaches a privileged class that it is their high religious duty to be lords and masters, to conserve and perpetuate in their own hands, and in the hands of their children, a monopoly of wealth and power. Such a doctrine propounded by a man [i.e., Palmer] pure in character, eminent for talents and elevated in position, must have been hailed as a revelation from heaven.<sup>271</sup>

Hodge pronounced Palmer's "elevated" doctrine

a monstrous perversion of the nature of the trust confided to them [i.e., the South]. . . . [The] great and noble trust committed to Southern slaveholders is not to perpetuate slavery, but to promote the intellectual, moral, religious and social culture and the elevation of four millions of Africans entrusted to their hands. . . . The doctrine of this sermon [is] to perpetuate the inferiority and dependence of four millions of human beings and their descendants indefinitely. What can this mean, if it does not mean that they must be kept in their present state of ignorance and semi-barbarism? It has, therefore, given a fearful shock to the public mind. It has alarmed the North, as though a gulf which neither civil nor religious institutions can span. . . . We hope it will prove to be the product of an enthusiastic nature, carried beyond the bounds of its own convictions, by the excitement of a great emergency.<sup>272</sup>

Hodge's hope for reconciliation was not, of course, forthcoming. On the eve of the outbreak of the war in April 1861, he found himself defending his earlier political positions. He had been called a "Black Republican" by one journal; his review of Palmer's sermon prompted a Southern journalist to declare "we [i.e., North and South] are two peoples, and the sooner we agree to separate in peace, the better for the human family"; and a well known South Carolinian (who quipped that Hodge "cannot forget that he was born a gentleman") wrote that Hodge's "State of the Country" was jubilantly welcomed into the ranks of Northern abolitionists. Particularly acute and hostile were the criticisms waged against Hodge by James H. Thornwell and others in the *Southern Presbyterian Review*.<sup>273</sup>

<sup>271</sup> Ibid., p. 169.

<sup>272</sup> Ibid., pp. 170-171.

<sup>273</sup> Thornwell wrote in early 1861:

It is hard to understand how a man, like the editor of the [Princeton] *Review*, whose life, it ought to be presumed has led him to understand the value of precision in the use of language . . . can fail to see that his definition of slavery is no definition of all; and that, if it were admitted, it would make all condemnation of slavery simply absurd. What rational man ever

Recoiling under such stringent criticism, Hodge enlisted numerous journals, newspapers, and correspondents (secular and ecclesial) who endorsed his January 1861 essay on the "State of the Country." Aggravated by the loss of mutual respect in the North-South political dialogue, Hodge argued again for the inherent unity of the states by tracing the concept of "nation" from Federalists like Washington and Madison to Democrats like Jackson. The nation, he somberly warned, was "engaged in the conflict for life or death." The question before the nation, Hodge insisted, was

whether we are to continue as a nation, or become a congeries of independent nations; whether our government shall remain as the Parthenon was when Pericles left it, the admiration of the world, or become what the Parthenon is now, with scarcely one stone upon another. . . . The destruction of the life of a nation is a thousand times worse than suicide, for it is not merely self-destruction but the destruction of posterity. Our national life we have received from fathers, we hold it in trust, and are bound to transmit it unimpaired to future generations.<sup>274</sup>

In his political analysis of the national crisis, Hodge explicitly specified the issues of race and slavery to be *the* decisive issues in the nation's divided mind. Thornwell and others, Hodge lamented, translated slavery from a local matter into a "cosmical" one.<sup>275</sup> In archetypes similar to those developed in William R. Taylor's influential book *Cavalier and Yankee*,<sup>276</sup> Hodge argued that "leading statesmen and politicians of the South" assumed "that slavery is a good and desirable institution, which should be cherished, perpetuated and extended." Such a political doctrine, pressed Hodge, rested on two assumptions.

First, that it is best that capital should own labour—that the most desirable organization of society is that in which the people are divided into only two classes, masters and slaves; that this secures the labourer from degradation and suffering, to which, under the system of free labor

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thought that it is immoral to hold in involuntary servitude any one who is, by his own mental state, unfit for freedom. . . . Let it be admitted that slavery is what all competent authority defines it to be, the system which makes the legal status of men, and women, and children to be that of *property*; that is, of *real estate*, or *chattels personal*, as the case may be. . . . ("The Princeton Review and Presbyterianism," *The Southern Presbyterian Review* 13 [1860–61]: 757–810)

Hodge quoted Thornwell's article in "The Church and the Country," *BRPR* 33 (1861): 343–344.

<sup>274</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 336.

<sup>275</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 350.

<sup>276</sup> William R. Taylor, *Cavalier and Yankee: The Old South and American National Character* (New York: George Braziller, 1961).

[that is, the so-called "wage-slavery" of the North], and that it afford the occasion and stimulus for the highest development of the master race. The second assumption, is the essential inferiority of the negro race; whether this inferiority is due to difference of origin, or to historical circumstances, does not alter the case, provided it is essential and permanent.<sup>277</sup>

Hodge pronounced both of these assumptions immoral. "That any large class of Presbyterians hold either of these views, that they believe it to be consistent with the Word of God. . . . we are very loth to admit." Hodge, the theologian, completed this April 1861 essay by addressing a wide array of national political issues: the constitutionality of the federal government; the implications of "popular sovereignty" in the face of the expansionism of slavery; the political theories of "Dr. Thornwell"; his opinions about the famed Dred Scott Case; and the utility of the Missouri Compromise. Coming at such an ominous moment in American history (April 1861) and comprehending as it does the magnitude of multiple national tragedies, Hodge's fifty-four page analysis illustrated his most mature political commentary. It also contained an especially poignant final paragraph. With the nation rent, Hodge hoped that "with the blessing of God, our church . . . may present to the world the edifying spectacle of Christian brotherhood unbroken by political convulsions."<sup>278</sup> Unfortunately the Presbyterians were as convulsed as the nation. In December of 1861 the Presbyterian Church of the Confederate States of America was formed. Thornwell undertook the assignment to address the Northern Presbyterians justifying the Southern departure. "Two nations," wrote Thornwell, "under any circumstances except those in perfect homogeneousness, cannot be united in one church without rigid exclusion of all civil and secular questions from its halls."<sup>279</sup> Dr. Benjamin Palmer of New Orleans was elected moderator of the Presbyterian denomination in the South.

Early in the following year (January 1862) Hodge wrote a defense of the Union's foreign policy. Entitled "England and America," the immediate background of the article was the "Trent Affair." The larger and more threatening issue, however, was the distinct possibility that England would acknowledge the Confederacy as a *de jure* government. Again, Hodge's considerable political acumen was displayed. He rehearsed the historic bonds of England and America; dismissed English and Scottish ecclesiastical "slanders" of Lincoln;

<sup>277</sup> Hodge, "Church and Country," pp. 346-347.

<sup>278</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 376.

<sup>279</sup> This address is reprinted in R. W. Thompson, *A History of The Presbyterian Churches in the United States* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1895), pp. 393-406.



interpreted the Trent Affair; suggested that the English "stand alone" in international opinion by their assessments of American political realities; and reminded the English of their own antislavery struggles and tradition and their experiences under Cromwell. Rhetorically summoning metaphors about the familial relationship between England and America, Hodge wrote:

The South has always been treated as a spoilt child, to which the other members of the family gave up for the sake of peace. . . . If she loved slavery, she might take what measures she saw fit to cherish and perpetuate it. But when she demanded, as a condition of her continuance in the Union, that the nation, as a nation, should love it, should legalize it, and extend it; that every territory . . . should be a slave territory . . . then the reason, heart and conscience of the North said, No! . . .<sup>280</sup>

After publishing three other war articles in 1862,<sup>281</sup> Hodge offered yet another assessment of the "nation's travail" in the January 1863 issue of *The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review*. He was haunted, he said, by the memories of the battle of Antietam (the bloodiest single-day battle of the war), Grant's assault on Vicksburg in the West, the successful blockade of the South's ports, Confederate victories at Fredericksburg, and Lincoln's frustration with the Union's military leadership. He was wary about the Union's military talent and wrote wearily to his brother of the North's strategic blunders. "It is this . . . and not the resources of the country, which makes me so despondent."<sup>282</sup> He also confided to his physician brother about his deteriorating health. After describing his symptoms, he diagnosed his own condition, "all this is, I suppose what you call nervous." He retired more frequently now to the farm on the Millstone River north of Princeton purchased earlier in 1856. He frequently and openly wept before his Seminary classes, and wrote to his brother about his inability to sleep, all of which were tell-tale signs of exhaustion and depression.<sup>283</sup>

The January 1863 article, he said later, was written "during the gloomiest period of the struggle . . . to promote harmony among the people of the North."<sup>284</sup> Of all his political commentaries in the 1860s, this essay com-

<sup>280</sup> Hodge, "England and America," p. 19. Earlier Hodge had written: "We [i.e., Americans and English] belong to the same household of faith, and that both *kata sarxa* [i.e., according to the flesh] and *kata pneuma* [i.e., according to the spirit] they [the English] are our nearest relations on earth" (*ibid.*, p. 2).

<sup>281</sup> See especially Samuel Baird, "Slavery and Slave Trade," *BRPR* 24 (1862): 524-548 and William Coppinger et al., "African Colonization," *BRPR* 24 (1862): 686-711.

<sup>282</sup> *LCH*, p. 479.

<sup>283</sup> See *LCH*, chapter 11.

<sup>284</sup> Hodge, "Retrospect," *BRPR, Index Volume* (1871), p. 35.



prised Hodge's most ethically distilled reflections about the war. At the same time it exhibited how Hodge tried to cope with his anguish over the war. In one of the most enduring modern analyses of American literati and their response to the Civil War, George Fredrickson in *The Inner Civil War: Northern Intellectuals and the Crisis of the Union* has argued that many Northern intellectuals believed in the war as a "short cut to national perfection."<sup>285</sup> The enormity of human suffering generated by the war, however, forced an abrupt reversal of such romantic, even glamorous academic appraisals. As Walt Whitman wrote in February 1863, "American seems to me now, though only in her youth, but brought *already here*, feeble, bandaged, and bloody *in hospital*." Apparently, a hospital was the best symbol Whitman could summon to describe the nation's hemorrhaging.<sup>286</sup> Certainly, no one can read James McPherson's masterful narrative, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era*, without acknowledging the force of Whitman's metaphor. The battle of Antietam alone unleashed a horror beyond human imagining, McPherson writes. The nearly 6,000 dead and 17,000 wounded exceeded by four times the number of casualties at the Normandy beaches in 1944. By 1865 more persons were killed in the Civil War than in all other American wars combined, including Vietnam.<sup>287</sup> The magnitude of that human anguish was not lost on Hodge.

In 1863 with an article entitled, "The War," Hodge entered into those imponderable quandaries about human suffering, "just wars," and the ethics of mid-war politics.<sup>288</sup> It was the closest Hodge ever came to unveiling his soul about the war in print. He focused on two large, intractable topics: how humans are to understand human suffering and how "means and ends" function in political decisions. Hodge's pastoral caution in both topics required that Americans walk a "narrow" path of reasoned, near-ascetic behavior. I suspect few persons, groping in the *realpolitik* of such dark days, could absorb or employ his counsel, heartfelt as it was. Yet this 1863 essay was a model of Hodge's reasoning powers, ethical perceptions, and political commentary—all couched in the womb of American Reformed theology.

The nation was stunned by the carnage the war produced. A plethora of sermons on the issue of human suffering and divine justice filled American pulpits from 1860 to 1865.<sup>289</sup> Civil War letters were equally filled with an-

<sup>285</sup> George Fredrickson, *The Inner Civil War: Northern Intellectuals and the Crisis of the Union* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), p. 2.

<sup>286</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 93.

<sup>287</sup> McPherson, *Battle Cry*, pp. 853ff.

<sup>288</sup> Charles Hodge, "The War," *BRPR* 35 (1863): 141-169. For other theological views see Louis S. Gerteis, *Morality and Utility in American Antislavery Reform* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1987).

<sup>289</sup> Quoted in Ann Rose, *Victorian America*, p. 62.

guish about the magnitude of human carnage. James Garfield wrote to his wife in 1862, "I am asking every day myself what this nation has done which is so much more wicked than the deeds of all others that this scourge of God should fall so heavily and not be lifted."<sup>290</sup> The "patriotic gore," that Edmund Wilson once wrote about, was full of questions and comments about God's presence or absence in the lives of ordinary citizens.<sup>291</sup> Hodge likewise wondered. He frequently addressed the preoccupation of American preachers, journalists, and politicians who sought meaning for the war's tragedy by referencing divine punishment, intervention, or absence.<sup>292</sup> However, finding most explanations of mid-century theodicy ill-founded, despairing, and uncomforting, he turned to his own theologizing to cope with the enormity of human suffering generated by the war. After positing that, "the will of God, however revealed, binds nations as well as individuals," Hodge asked "Are the sufferings under which we, as a nation, are now labouring, divine judgements—the manifestation of God's displeasure of our national sins?"<sup>293</sup> Hodge replied that the question was wrongly put. Human suffering or human comfort, he insisted, are *not* "distributed [by God] in this world *on the principles of justice* . . ." Hodge elaborated on this "hard saying" and a longer quotation in his own words is needed to track and appreciate his argument.

<sup>290</sup> Ibid., p. 62.

<sup>291</sup> Edmund Wilson, *Patriotic Gore: Studies in the Literature of the American Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966.)

<sup>292</sup> American sermons during the Civil War have been surveyed in Chesebrough, "God has Ordained This War" and Charles Stewart, "Civil War Preaching" in *Sermons in American History*, DeWitte Holland, ed. (Nashville, TN: Abington Press, 1971). Stewart argues that most Civil War sermons were based on a fundamental religious tradition in America that God controls all earthly things and actions and that only God—not science, armies, human leaders, or industry—could grant final victory. Within that theistic perspective, however, sermons North and South changed focus as the war progressed. Earlier in the war, clergy on both sides saw the war as "grand crusades" for their respective cultures; during the middle period, military victories or losses were attributed to God's intervention or punishments; and during the last years—the bloodiest—preachers tried to convince their respective audiences that victory, not surrender, was divinely ordained and that costs in lives and material were necessary for the fulfillment of God's will, intentions, and divine plans.

One notable example of this last type of sermon was Horace Bushnell's commencement address to Yale graduates in July 1865. Using the biblical text, "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission," Bushnell applied his vicarious theory of atonement to the North's (and Yale's) war dead.

And here it is that the dead of our war have done for us a work so precious, which is all their own—they have bled for us; and by this simple sacrifice of blood they have opened a new great chapter of life. . . . In this blood our unity is cemented and forever sanctified. . . . One thing more we are also sworn upon the dead to do; viz., to see that every vestige of slavery is swept clean. . . . We swear by our dead to be Americans. Our position is gained! Thank God we have a country, and that country has chance of a future. (*Building Eras in Religion* [New York: Charles Scribner, 1881], pp. 26–28)

<sup>293</sup> Hodge, "The War," p. 141.

It is no less clearly taught [in the Bible] that the distribution of good and evil in this world to individuals, churches, or nations, is not determined by principles of justice, but according to the wise and benevolent providence of God. He puts up one, and puts down another of the princes of the earth; he exalts one nation and humbles another; he gives one man prosperity and another adversity, *not according to their several deserts*, but according to his own good pleasure. . . . Happiness, abundance of good things of this life, health, riches and honours are not the highest gifts of God. Poverty, suffering, the necessity of labour, disappointment and reproach are often the greatest blessings, and evidence of God's especial favour. . . . We, as a nation, have sins enough to justify our destruction. . . . This war, for what we know, may be a punishment for those sins. But no man has a right to assume this, much less has he the right to press that assumption on the consciences of others. It may be, as other wars and trials, individual and nation, have been a mark of God's favour; the discipline by which he is educating the nation for a higher career of usefulness in His service. . . . It [i.e., suffering] may be the necessary process of development of our national life, all be meant in mercy and not in wrath. . . . At any rate, we are not to take for granted that God is against us. We are not to assume, even should the rebellion be successful, that God approves the cause of the Confederates, that he favours the perpetuity and extension of slavery; or that he condemns the efforts of the [federal] government to preserve our national life and institutions. There is need for caution against this pharisaical and censorious spirit. . . . Do not the Scriptures and all experience teach us, that God is sovereign, that the orderings of his providence are not determined by justice, but by mysterious wisdom for the accomplishment of higher ends than mere punishment or reward? We are in His hands, and we are to learn His will and our duty, not from adverse or prosperous dispensations of providence, but from His holy Word.<sup>294</sup>

Few, I suspect, found much comfort in such transcendent consolation, and fewer still could fathom such utter acquiescence in the paradox of providence and inscrutability.<sup>295</sup>

<sup>294</sup> Ibid., pp. 143–146 (italics mine). The section of this article is, I believe, lifted from earlier writings on the “providence of God in human affairs,” including unprinted sermons and published expositions based on the text of Romans 13. See especially: Charles Hodge, “Romans 13,” APTS, n.d.; idem, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 1st ed. (Philadelphia: Grigg & Eliot, 1835), in print (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1950 & 1976); and idem, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1, chapter 11.

<sup>295</sup> It should be noted that Hodge's trust in the ultimate goodness of God, a trust that was mysterious and irreconcilable, appears to be patterned after Calvin's in Book 2, chapter 17 of the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*:

For even though in our miseries our sin ought always to come to mind, that punishment itself may incite us to repentance, yet we see how Christ claims for the Father's secret plan



The last half of this 1863 article addressed the question of the ethical nature and justification of the war. Many contemporary historians have argued that the war started as an effort to defend the Union or preserve the South's understanding of nationhood but ended over the issue of slavery.<sup>296</sup> Like Lincoln, Hodge argued that the war was launched to preserve the Union and that self-preservation of a nation is a legitimating end for war-making. Emancipation, however, was a subsidiary issue and qualified only as a means to that greater end. By early 1863, however, slavery and emancipation were grafted onto most Northerner's rationale for the war. Hodge acknowledged this merging and reminded his readers how complex and polarized the war's moral justification had become: pro-Southern sentiments in the North (especially among the Democrats), sentiments laced with racial animosity; anti-Black sentiments in the Republican party and an invigoration of the African colonization movement; widening abuse of the president by abolitionists; antislavery proposals in Congress; the enrollment of "persons of African descent" in the Union's military.

Hodge finally turned to an analysis of Lincoln's leadership. The immediate occasion was the president's mounting inclinations toward more immediate emancipation, the passage of the "Confiscation Acts,"<sup>297</sup> and, more particularly, General McClellan's public contempt of Lincoln. McClellan openly warned Lincoln against emancipation and in July 1862 instructed the commander in chief that "Military power should not be allowed to interfere with the relations of servitude." Lincoln later replied to McClellan and several others that "This government cannot much longer play a game in which it stakes all, and its enemies stake nothing."<sup>298</sup> General Grant, on the other

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a broader justice than simply punishing each one deserves. . . . But we must so cherish moderation that we do not try to make God render account to us, but so reverence his secret judgments as to consider his will the truly just cause of all things. . . . So we must infer that, while the disturbances in the world deprive us of judgement, God out of the pure light of his justice and wisdom tempers and directs these very movements in the best-conceived order to a right end. (John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Vol 2., Ford Lewis Battles, trans. [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960], p. 211)

<sup>296</sup> See James McPherson, *Abraham Lincoln and the Second American Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), chapters 1 and 2.

<sup>297</sup> A series of acts were passed in the Congress during summer of 1862 known as the "Confiscation Acts." Basically, they were acts which addressed the confiscation of Confederate property, including slaves. It will be recalled that General David Hunter, Hodge's brother-in-law, freed slaves in his "Department of the South" on the grounds that they were liberated Confederate property. Lincoln revoked Hunter's orders and rebuked the General. See McPherson, *Battle Cry for Freedom*, p. 499.

<sup>298</sup> I am indebted to McPherson, *Battle Cry for Freedom*, chapter 16 for this summary and these quotations.



hand, argued that emancipation was a means to a military victory and he regularly and successfully assigned freed slaves to non-front-line military duties in the Western campaigns. In an open letter to Horace Greeley, in August 1862, Lincoln concisely stated his views:

My paramount object in the struggle is to save the union and it is not either to save or destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing any slave, I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing all the slaves I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone, I would also do that.<sup>299</sup>

The political portions of Hodge's 1863 article—and his attempts to decipher the ethical configurations of “ends and means”—must be read in this emotionally charged and politically ambiguous context. In language very similar to Lincoln's, Hodge insisted that the government had clarified its foremost objective in waging war. Hodge defended what he understood as that war's purpose from the beginning:

The sole object of the war was proclaimed to be the preservation of the Union and of the Constitution. . . . The abolition of slavery, when spoken of in this connection, was only averted to as a means to an end. If the Constitution and Union could not be preserved without abolition of slavery, then slavery should, if possible, be abolished. To this sentiment, we believe the heart and the country fully responded. It can, however, hardly be questioned, that what was spoken of as a means, is by a large party at home and abroad, now regarded as the legitimate end. The abolitionists, to a great extent, are for the war as a means of putting an end to African slavery; as a means for the restoration of the Union, they would be opposed to it. The same is true, to a great extent, with the philanthropists of Europe. . . .

This is a very serious matter. If abolition of slavery be made, either really or avowedly, the object of the war, we believe we shall utterly fail. If the preservation of the Union and the Constitution be sinserely adhered to as the only legitimate end of the war, we believe we shall not only be successful in the conflict, but that the abolition of slavery will follow in a natural and healthful manner. We regard it as the duty of every man to enter his protest against any departure from the object for which the country so enthusiastically took up arms.<sup>300</sup>

<sup>299</sup> Abraham Lincoln, *Abraham Lincoln: His Speeches and Writings*, Roy P. Basler, ed. (New York: The World Publishing Co., 1946), p. 652. Lincoln wrote this public letter in response to Greeley's editorial in the *New York Tribune* entitled “The Prayer of Twenty Millions” which accused Lincoln of indecision and mismanaged opportunities to end both slavery and the war.

<sup>300</sup> Hodge, “The War,” pp. 150–151.

It would be morally wrong, Hodge insisted, to posit emancipation as the *raison d'être* of the war because emancipation, according to Hodge, was not a sufficiently "just cause" for waging war.

War is a tremendous evil. It is no slight matter for parents to give up their children to death. The government which calls for this great sacrifice must make out a case of necessity . . . or the war itself is a crime. . . . We are not bound to abolish slavery by war, as we should be bound to resist invasion, or we are bound to suppress rebellion by force of arms.<sup>301</sup>

Slavery, *per se*, did not threaten the nation's existence, according to Hodge, and, therefore, its abolition could not be established, even on moral grounds, as a sufficient justification for waging war. Furthermore, Hodge continued, the forceful abolition of slavery as a rationale for making war lacked a sufficient consensus and popular support. He quoted the "most influential of the Republican papers [the *New York Times*]" to augment his case. Finally, he contended, the expected emancipation of slaves was justifiable only insofar as the president, in his capacity as commander in chief deemed it a necessary war measure. That is, emancipation may be legally and appropriately implemented only as a "war measure" when Lincoln could rightly exercise his "extraordinary war powers," as he had when he suspended the right of habeas corpus. Yet such presidential authority was limited, Hodge insisted. "He [the president] cannot make laws to be permanently binding. He acts for the present and for pressing emergencies. The President does not pretend to be a dictator."<sup>302</sup> When Lincoln issued the official Emancipation Proclamation (1 January 1863) he did so as a "war measure" and as an "act of justice" applicable against those states in rebellion. Hodge agreed that a Constitutional amendment would have to follow if emancipation of slaves was to remain a permanent national policy.

The normally restrained Hodge concluded his article with an admixture of elation and caution about the prospects of emancipation.

We are not to deceive ourselves. There is something so grand in this idea of three millions of slaves raised in one day, and by the stroke of a pen, to the dignity of freemen, in the vastness of the social change thus effected, and in the world-wide consequences of such a measure, that it is almost impossible to avoid being carried away by feeling, and uttering shouts of exultation. . . . [Not] one intelligent man in ten, or the

<sup>301</sup> Ibid., p. 152.

<sup>302</sup> Ibid., p. 166.

President himself believes that he can legally ordain the permanent abolition of slavery throughout the United States. His [Lincoln's] proclamation can only operate as instruction to his subordinates to regard and treat all slaves who come within their power as freemen. This is a vast deal, and may produce a radical change in the state of the country. With this conscientious men, loyal to the Constitution, ought to be contended. The right, in the long run, is always the most effective.<sup>303</sup>

Hodge rested political comment and polemics after publishing this 1863 essay. While there were random, general comments about the war, abolitionism, slavery, and national suffering in late 1863 and all of 1864, I can find nothing in his writings during 1864 to 1865 about the passage of the 13th Amendment, Reconstruction, or Lincoln's famed "Second Inaugural." He did write regularly to his brother Hugh in Philadelphia about politics, the war, and the nation's economy. In September 1864 he dismissed the Philadelphian McClellan, an 1864 presidential candidate. "While I think highly of McClellan, I have no intention of voting for him. . . . I regard Gen. McClellan as a first-rate Captain in a very bad ship, with a horribly bad crew, and I have no notion of going to sea with him."<sup>304</sup>

Hodge voted for Lincoln in 1864, and apparently watched the war grind to a bitter and horrendous halt at the Appomattox Courthouse on 9 April 1865. When the news came to the Seminary of Lincoln's assassination, Hodge was "convulsed in his entire nature." A student later wrote, "I told him the facts of the case. . . . With quivering lips, a face as paled as death, he said, 'O, it cannot be, it cannot be!' When I read him Secretary Stanton's dispatch, Dr. Hodge burst into a flood of tears." Later that April day, when the Seminary community assembled in Miller Chapel, Hodge was asked to pray. "The petitions began with a sob, and ended with a sob, the great heart seemed liked to break with the weight that was upon it."<sup>305</sup> "It was not merely for the loss of a great man when most needed," Hodge later wrote, "or of one whom had rendered his country inestimable service, but grief for a man whom everyone personally loved."<sup>306</sup>

Hodge published his last formal comment about the war in an article entitled "President Lincoln" in July 1865.<sup>307</sup> It was part theology, part politics, part eulogy. It was also an impressive summary of the causes of the war and

<sup>303</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 167–169.

<sup>304</sup> *LCH*, p. 481.

<sup>305</sup> *LCH*, p. 482.

<sup>306</sup> Charles Hodge, "President Lincoln," *BRPR* 37 (1865): 445.

<sup>307</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 435–458.

its outcomes.<sup>308</sup> "No Christian can look upon the events of the last four years without being deeply impressed with the conviction that they have been ordered by God to produce great and lasting changes in the state of the country, and probably of the world." After briefly tracing the history of the conflict, Hodge wrote plainly, "It cannot be reasonably doubted that the great design of the authors of the rebellion was the extension and preservation of African Slavery." Each word in this sentence was carefully nuanced: the war was intentionally begun by leaders; it was constitutionally a rebellion, not a "war between states"; it was fueled by economic goals requiring the extension and protection of slavery, slavery of a particular race. In moral tones harsher than Hodge had ever written before, he denounced American slavery as sinful because Southern slave laws that "perpetuated slavery were unscriptural, immoral and, in the highest degree, cruel and unjust." Moreover, those slave laws required "the perpetual degradation of a class of our fellow-men." And finally he censured Southern slaveholders and church leaders.

There is not one man in a thousand who will not be more or less corrupted by the possession of absolute power, even when that power is legitimate. But when it is illegitimate, and requires for its security the constant exercise of injustice, no community and no human being can escape its demoralizing influence. . . . The moral sense becomes perverted by the necessity of justifying what is wrong, so that we see even good men, men who we must regard as children of God, vindicating what every unprejudiced mind instinctively perceives to be wrong. It is enough to humble the whole Christian world to hear our Presbyterian brethren in the South declaring that the great mission of the Southern church was to conserve the system of African slavery. Since the death of Christ, no such dogma stains the record of an ecclesiastical body.<sup>309</sup>

Hodge proceeded to outline the "important changes in the state of the country" caused by the war: it dismantled American slavery; it established the

<sup>308</sup> The literature about the origins and causes of the Civil War is enormous. For earlier treatments, see Howard K. Beale, "What Historians Have Said about the Causes of the Civil War" in *Theory and Practice in Historical Study* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1946) and Morris R. Cohen, "Causation and Its Application to History," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 3 (1942): 12-29. For more recent analysis, see Avery O. Craven, *An Historian and the Civil War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964); Eric Foner, "The Causes of the American Civil War: Recent Interpretations and New Directions," *Civil War History* 20 (1974): 197-214; and Beringer et al., eds., *Why the South Lost the Civil War* (Baton Rouge, LA: University of Louisiana Press, 1989), especially chapter 1, "Historians and the Civil War," pp. 5-33.

<sup>309</sup> Hodge, "President Lincoln," pp. 438-439.



constitutional nature of the nation and the limits of states' sovereignty;<sup>310</sup> it revealed an astonishing development in America's economic powers about which Hodge raised moral challenges;<sup>311</sup> and, finally, the war touched and released an "astonishing exhibition of benevolence." Regarding this last mentioned outcome Hodge pointed to the Christian and Sanitary Commissions, which focused on the "welfare programs" during the war, as well as the voluntary associations and monetary contributions by which Americans addressed the human suffering in the North and South.

Finally, Hodge reflected on Lincoln's assassination. Rarely, Hodge wrote, had any nation so grieved. "When Mr. Lincoln died, the nation felt herself widowed." Calling the assassination "a most mysterious event," Hodge tried to fathom its purpose: "What are we, that we should pretend to understand the Almighty unto perfection, or that we should assume to trace the ways of him whose footsteps are in the great deep. . . . It makes us feel our own ignorance and impotency. . . ." <sup>312</sup>

In Hodge's estimate, Lincoln excelled in three arenas and thereby the national calamity of his death was multiplied threefold. First, Hodge admired the quality of Lincoln's character.

None but pedants can look on Mr. Lincoln as an uneducated man. He had a culture a thousand times more effective than usually effected in the schools of learning. He was remarkably sagacious; perceiving intuitively the truth, presenting it clearly . . . Some of his state papers and public letters are masterly. . . . [But] the crown trait of his character was tenderness of heart; it was this more than his talents, position or services that endeared him to the people. . . . It was made a complaint against him by sterner men, that he often stood in the way of justice. . . . God

<sup>310</sup> Hodge wrote: "The war has not destroyed the sovereignty of the States; it has simply defined it. It has not obliterated the State lines nor abrogated States rights; it has only settled the fact that we are a nation, and not a confederacy of nations from which any member or number of members may withdraw at pleasure" (ibid., p. 440).

<sup>311</sup> This is how Hodge put it:

We have earned the right to place our selves in the rank of the foremost nations of the age. God grant that the consciousness of strength may not render us arrogant, unjust, or aggressive. It will be a great blessing if this giant should now seek repose, or devote his strength to the works of peace; to conquering the wilderness, to developing resources of the country, and making it a refuge of the oppressed and the home of the free. (Ibid., p. 442)

Hodge's brief comment about the economic impact of the war is not off the mark or irrelevant. This aspect of the war and the forging of American industrialization has attracted the attention of many historians and economists. For a summary of this extensive literature see Partick O'Brian, *The Economic Effects of the American Civil War* (London: Gardner Press, 1988).

<sup>312</sup> Hodge, "Lincoln," pp. 444-445.

poured on his head the excellent oil of mercy, and its fragrance fills the land.<sup>313</sup>

Such comments reveal as much about Hodge's values as it does about Lincoln.

Second, Hodge tried to analyze the source of Lincoln's "public service" noting that few statesmen anywhere had such a "herculean task" of governing during a national crisis. Hodge suggested that Lincoln's leadership rested on two characteristics: a political style that kept him from being "wedded to one idea, or to any abstract principle. If one plan would not do, he would try another. . . . but what was best he did not attempt to decide beforehand"; the other was what Hodge called "a spirit of conciliation."<sup>314</sup> Compared to contemporary analyses of Lincoln's pragmatic political theory, Hodge's analysis was not far off the mark.<sup>315</sup>

Finally, Hodge commented admiringly on Lincoln's handling of the slavery issue. Hodge cited Lincoln's views about the "unity of mankind" controversy which must have resonated with Hodge and his skirmishes with American scientists. The "unity of the human race" served as "the foundation for all President Lincoln's opinions and policy in regard to slavery," Hodge insisted.

Since all men are the children of Adam; made of one blood and possessing the same nation, and therefore are all entitled to be regarded and treated as men. No symptom of permanent slavery can be justified, except on the assumption that the enslaved class are a different and inferior race. . . . He [Lincoln] held that every man fit to be free was entitled to be free; that every man able to manage property had the right to hold property; that every man capable of discharging the duties of a father is entitled to the custody of his children. From this it would follow, by parity of reason that every man who has the intelligence and moral character to the proper exercise of the elective franchise [i.e., the right to vote] is entitled to enjoy it, if compatible with the public good. In other

<sup>313</sup> Ibid., pp. 446-447.

<sup>314</sup> Ibid., p. 449. In the same essay Hodge wrote,

Another prominent feature of Mr. Lincoln's administration was a spirit of conciliation. From first to last, he endeavored to persuade the revolted State to return to their allegiance. And in the process of reconstruction, his ruling idea was to disturb as little as possible existing relations, to inflict as few penalties as possible, and to restore all rights and privilege as fully and as rapidly as consistent with public safety. (Ibid., p. 450)

Hodge was making reference here to Lincoln's early (December 1863) plans for "amnesty and reconstruction" and Lincoln's veto of the Wade-Davis Bill (July 1864) whose "iron-clad" oath provision was, according to Lincoln, vindictive and unworkable.

<sup>315</sup> See the essays in John L. Thomas, ed., *Abraham Lincoln and the American Political Tradition* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1986).

words, these rights and privileges cannot justly be made dependent on the colour of the skin or any other adventitious difference.<sup>316</sup>

Hodge concluded his 1865 article—and his sustained commentary of the Civil War era—with a prayer that “the Spirit which was on him who led us through the wilderness, may be given in double measure to him [President Johnson] whose office it is to give the nation rest.”

#### POSTSCRIPT ON HODGE'S POLITICAL DISCOURSE ABOUT SLAVERY AND THE CIVIL WAR

The trajectory of Charles Hodge's political discourse was characteristically consistent. From the Philadelphia Republicanism, through the Whiggery of the Jacksonian era and his support of Republicans Frémont and Lincoln, Hodge's views about slavery and the war fell within the broad outlines of this traceable American political tradition. Like his political mentors at Princeton College and beyond, he assumed that no republic could prosper without public virtue; that the most practical source of that virtue was religion; and that American Reformed theology possessed an explicit obligation to critique Americans' political convictions. Alexis de Tocqueville found these predispositions of Hodge to be widely shared in antebellum America. “Americans show by their practice that they feel the high necessity of imparting morality to democratic communities by means of religion.”<sup>317</sup> Most antebellum Whigs like Hodge believed that moral fibre in the citizenry was essential for viable democratic government, cultural values, and the maintenance of a hierarchically ordered society. Thus virtue, consensus, and duty were impregnated with Hodge's confessional and Reformed doctrines of human depravity, Scriptural authority, the necessity of unified Christian communities, and postmillennial hopes. In contrast to preachers, theologians, and ordinary citizens who, as James Moorhead has described, interpreted the war in apocalyptic terms, Hodge never, to the best of my knowledge, resorted to such mythic or millennial language. His earliest designations about the war—that it was a “ghastly hallucination” perpetuated by Southern and irrational forces

<sup>316</sup> Hodge, “Lincoln,” pp. 456–457. These estimates of Lincoln by Hodge can be put in perspective if read in conjunction with Merrill D. Peterson's *Lincoln in American Memory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994). Peterson identifies five overarching themes through which the Lincoln image has been fashioned: Savior of the Union, Great Emancipator, Man of the People, First American, Self-Made Man. In 1865 Hodge was already sounding many of these themes.

<sup>317</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Henry Reeve, trans. (New York: Schocken Books, 1961), vol. 2, pp. 22–29.

“verily thinking they were doing God’s service”—remained constant through the war. Finally, like Lincoln, he interpreted the war as a matter of national self-preservation.

That interpretation is not surprising. Hodge eschewed premillennialist doctrines and his political assumptions required what Merle Curti once called a “search for balance.”<sup>318</sup> He posited: order above individual freedom; common sense ethical norms prior to institutions; and acquiesce in presence of tradition and legitimate authority, the latter explicitly derived from his analysis of the Apostles’ injunctions in Romans 13. What Hodge too readily dismissed was the depth and intensity of the moral passion that captured and innervated abolitionism and slave culture. Hodge had little sensitivity for what Robert Wiebe has called “a society of halves” that is, a mid-century society that was increasingly divided—in class orientation, political allegiance, racial ideologies, economical growth, and religious diversity.<sup>319</sup> Hodge clung to the assumption that rational discourse wielded political power, that words and argument could persuade as well as transform. By 1862 the power of that cherished ideal was ebbing. Hodge confessed to his brother in private that he feared that the great political controversies in the nation as well as American denominations were resolved by power rather than persuasion.

<sup>318</sup> Merle Curti, *Human Nature in American Thought: A History* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1980), chapter 4.

<sup>319</sup> Robert H. Wiebe, *The Opening of American Society: From the Adoption of the Constitution to the Eve of Disunion* (New York: Random House, 1984), chapter 16.



## Conclusions: Looking Forward

Over two decades ago a seasoned observer of American culture, the English scholar Marcus Cunliffe, made a comment about the writing of American religious history. "The record is confusing: partly because we have tended to stress the vigour of innovators and to forget the vigour of the religious orthodox; and partly because what happened is genuinely complex."<sup>320</sup> Both of these generalizations might be tailored to fit Charles Hodge. Certainly, he was no innovator in theology, if by that we mean that he transformed or redirected the foundational commitments of Protestant theology. His unflinching commitment to Reformed orthodoxies coupled with a Whig-bound cultural noblesse oblige shaped and distanced Hodge's attitudes toward the multidimensional trajectories in American Protestantism in nineteenth-century America. While pluralistic and relativistic cultural energies drove the "modern impulses" in American religious beliefs into greater religious diversity in the mid-nineteenth century, Hodge stood firm and unequivocal, conceding as little as possible. That conservative stance culminated in 1872 with the publication of his *Systematic Theology*. Considered by standards within its own genre, this three-volume work was erudite, comprehensive, and clear. But it was also unimaginative and wooden. Already seventy years-old, Hodge summarized far more than he explored. In a more comprehensive appraisal, however, Paul K. Conkin observes that Hodge represented "the late, fully conventional versions of Calvinism" and the "scholarly, scientific and philosophical challenges that faced Hodge were all but overwhelming. . . ." Conkin added that "almost anyone could cook up a religion that better appealed to modern humans" than the one which Hodge defended. Hodge brokered a traditional Christianity as "true, not indulgent, as consistent with the realities of human experience,

<sup>320</sup> Marcus Cunliffe, "American Religious History," *Journal of American Studies* 1 (1967): 126.

not with our fondest wishes and fancies."<sup>321</sup> Cunliffe was undoubtedly correct. Innovators are more interesting than conservators and Hodge was no innovator. Cunliffe's second generalization about the complexities inherent in religious orthodoxies, however, is more suggestive when applied to Hodge.

The Harvard psychologist Henry A. Murray once remarked that each human is in some ways like *everybody* else, in some ways like *somebody* else, and in some ways like *nobody* else.<sup>322</sup> Charles Hodge was certainly similar to every other Christian and, in some ways, like most other Reformed theologians. But in other ways, Hodge was different.

Precisely as a theologian who vigorously engaged pivotal issues in his own culture, Hodge emerged as a distinct Reformed theologian. That is, the theological center from which Hodge thought, wrote, and lobbied was, in turn, conditioned and nuanced by political and cultural realities peculiarly American. Hodge's mid-century contexts did more than nominate the issues. His confession of faith required participation in those cultural issues and those participatory processes shaped his own theological understanding. Such robust engagement with those cultural issues further suggests that Hodge's understanding of Reformed theology cannot be reduced to the assemblage of "great and immutable truths" collated from the *depositum fidei*. Again, Cunliffe is prophetic. This Americanizing of Reformed theology is complex and we have yet to read a scholarly assessment of Hodge as a Reformed theologian within the American milieu.

If my assessment in this work of Hodge's three discourses is convincing, several larger and more suggestive conclusions might be drawn. First, it is patently misleading to suggest, as many historians and theologians have, that Hodge's thought was a mere repristination of seventeenth-century Reformed orthodoxy. Of course he read, digested, and employed the language and theologies of Calvin, the Westminster Confession, and Protestant scholastics such as F. Turretin. However, American cultural movements and crises required Hodge to mediate an *American* Reformed theology with convictions contoured differently than German, English, Scot, or Swiss theologians. Many of the stalwart tenets of Hodge's Reformed faith, acquired early in Philadelphia, Princeton, and Germany, were interpreted (if not translated) within the complexities and contingencies of American culture and politics: 1) issues of

<sup>321</sup> Paul K. Conkin, *The Uneasy Center: Reformed Christianity in Antebellum America* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), pp. 232–233.

<sup>322</sup> Quoted by Daniel Bell, "The 'Hegelian Secret': Civil Society and American Exceptionalism" in *Is America Different? A New Look at American Exceptionalism*, Byron E. Shafer, ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 50.

slavery, Bushnellian hermeneutics, and a “doxological” American science required an explication of the authority of Scripture in human affairs of a particular and informed kind; 2) the appalling suffering of the Civil War and the Lincoln presidency required Hodge to reflect and hesitate about the sovereignty of God and America as an “almost chosen nation”; 3) the splintering of the Presbyterian denomination revealed the fragility and vulnerability of the Presbyterian polity; and 4) remembering that he called the Civil War a “ghastly hallucination,” Hodge recognized that the best persons in both North and South were corrupted by regional biases, economic spoils, and truncated understandings of the Kingdom of God.

A second generalization about Hodge follows. Insofar as his convictions and contexts required him not to interpret the Reformed theological tradition “locally,” they also tended to distinguish him, especially from other nineteenth-century Reformed theologians seeking to broaden, liberalize, and accommodate Calvinism. Hodge’s common sense and anti-Kantian assumptions were openly dissimilar from those of Jonathan Edwards as well as later New England Calvinists (for example, E. A. Parks, Nathaniel Taylor, the Beechers, and Horace Bushnell). His deeply held Whig convictions distanced Hodge from many Southern Reformed theologians, especially James H. Thornwell, whom Hodge once called an “ultra-Calvinist.” The three topics of this study concurrently reveal Hodge’s divergence from the Reformed traditions of Schleiermacher and Tholuck in Germany and William Cunningham in Scotland. Arguably, Hodge’s Americanized nineteenth-century Reformed theology was a theological genre of its own.

Third, there also remains, largely unexplored, Hodge’s legacy. It too is more complex than is usually supposed. Precisely because of Hodge’s persistent engagement with major cultural and political realities of nineteenth-century America, it may be conjectured that Hodge’s *American* Reformed Theology extended through a lineage that culminates in Reinhold Niebuhr as much—and maybe more—than Hodge’s assumed bequests to B. B. Warfield, J. Gresham Machen and the various strains of twentieth-century evangelicalism. How Hodge is understood by his immediate successors at Princeton and beyond has yet to be addressed by either American historians or theologians.

Fourth, future scholars, especially theologians and historians, who seek to account for the complexities of Hodge’s thought will be required to interpret him within a much broader cultural framework than has heretofore been offered. One (though not the only) way revisionist scholars might address the contention of this monograph (i.e., that Hodge’s interfacing with American cultural issues generated a distinctive American Reformed theology) is to lo-

cate the larger corpus of Hodge's discourse within the broader and lively scholarly debate about "American exceptionalism."<sup>323</sup> One distinguished proponent of the "distinctiveness" school of this debate, Jack P. Green, has argued that with the advent of the Revolution and Independence, American societies "defined more fully than ever before what made their societies different from those of the Old World and similar to each other. In the press of elaborating their Americanness, they quickly began to develop an infinitely more favorable sense of collective self."<sup>324</sup> By the early part of the nineteenth century, Greene insists, American writers affirmed and intensified their positive identification of America as an exceptional place, people, and culture. While further explication of this historiography is not possible here, much of this scholarship could be utilized to broaden current interpretations of Hodge's thought and agenda. As noted earlier, Martin Marty insists there is an "American way of being religious," and to identify that distinctive way, one needs to listen to the "vivid dialogue with the context surrounding [American] Christianity."<sup>325</sup> "Every nation," Hodge wrote in 1859, "has its peculiar character and usages, the product of and manifestation of its organic life. This country is no exception to this law."<sup>326</sup> The same could be claimed for Hodge's way of doing Reformed theology.<sup>327</sup>

However, in the end, I am not unaware of a curious irony: during Hodge's sustained, vigorous efforts to mediate a traditional, unifying, conserving theological *center* for American churches and culture he unwittingly forged a distinctively different *and* culturally uncongenial Reformed theology at Princeton. That is, when the center seeks to influence the peripheries, something happens to the center itself.

<sup>323</sup> According to Seymour Martin Lipset, this term was apparently first used by Alexis de Tocqueville. For a useful summary of the positions and controversies involved in this growing historiographic discourse, see Seymour Martin Lipset, "American Exceptionalism Reaffirmed" in *Is American Different?*, pp. 1–45.

<sup>324</sup> Jack P. Greene, *The Intellectual Construction of America* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), p. 162.

<sup>325</sup> Martin Marty, "North America" in *The Oxford History of Christianity*, John McManners, ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), chapter 11.

<sup>326</sup> Charles Hodge, "Sunday Laws," *BRPR* 31 (1859): 758.

<sup>327</sup> Promising correlates to these perspectives by American cultural historians are the writings on modern theologians such as Douglas John Hall, Robert J. Schreiter, and Stephen B. Bevans. These scholars argue the theological thinking inevitably involves that art of praxis, that theology always summons one to contextualization where the gap between thought and existence is seriously addressed. See especially Douglas John Hall, *Thinking the Faith: Christian Theology in a North American Context* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg/Fortress Press, 1989); Robert Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1985); and Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992).



















